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DETECTIVE DAVE'S CLOSE CALL.

BY DAN DUNNING, of the Secret Service Corps.



IN RESPONSE TO THE SUMMONS OF DICK, THE RUFFIAN, THE PARTY WAS ADMITTED.

Detective Dave's Close Call;

OR,

Farrel Fox, the Man of Many Faces.

BY DAN DUNNING,
(of the Secret Service Corps.)

CHAPTER I.

A MIDNIGHT MYSTERY.

It was about two o'clock in the morning when three men entered the residence of Mr. Benjamin Hunter. Evidently the men were expected, for a peculiar knock on the basement door caused it to be opened, and entering the men ascended to the parlor floor, where two of them remained, while the third, having removed his coat and shoes, left the parlor carrying a short iron bar in one hand, and a dark lantern in the other.

"Did you see who it was let us in, Jimmy?"

"No," was the equally guarded answer.

"Don't know whether it was a man or a woman, I suppose?" persisted the first speaker.

"No, no! See here, George! This is Kelly's job—don't try to pry into how he managed to get in; I don't know and don't—Ha! What's that?"

"That" was the muffled sound of a heavy body falling on the floor above, and the men in the parlor listened intently, and in evident alarm, for further indications of trouble.

Ten, twenty, thirty minutes passed in anxious silence—and then the watchers were startled by the noise of the opening and closing of the hall door. It was done softly—cautiously—but to the listeners, the noise seemed loud enough to wake the dead.

There was a dim light burning in the hall, and, a half-minute after the closing of the door the men in the parlor saw a man stealing up the stairs.

"They're onto us! Kelly'll get the collar sure!" excitedly whispered George, adding:

"I wonder if they've got the house surrounded? Come, let's try out the back way!"

Jimmy, however, was made of sterner stuff.

"Shut up!" he commanded in a hoarse whisper. "If it is a 'collar,' the house is surrounded, but they'll have to fight for me."

Another hour elapsed, the burglars in the parlor—now feeling assured that there was nothing to fear from the police—taking things quite coolly, although "George" could scarcely restrain his uneasiness and curiosity regarding the movements of the third of the trio of burglars.

Suddenly—just as the clocks were chiming the hour of four—the burglar who had been designated as Kelly appeared at the door of the parlor and beckoned to his comrades to follow him down stairs.

On reaching the basement, Kelly went to the sink and washed his hands before exchanging a word with his confederates.

"We must watch our chance to get out, now, and be mighty careful about it, too," he said on joining the others, who had observed the great care exercised by the leader in cleaning his hands.

Kelly seemed somewhat excited on joining his confederates, who now were peeping through the window curtains, watching for a favorable opportunity to quit the house, and this presented itself just as the leader joined them.

"Now's our time! That policeman won't turn his head again until he reaches Sixth avenue!" declared Jimmy, and at an assenting nod from the leader, started out of the basement.

"Get along!" directed Kelly a minute, or

two, later—having given "Jimmy" a chance to get clear of the house, or return if he saw anything suspicious—and George, following the example of his confederate, slipped through the basement door and was out on the sidewalk, walking toward Broadway, within half a minute.

Half a minute later, the leader followed the example of his confederates, joining them before they crossed Broadway, where all three boarded a cross-town car bound eastward.

About an hour later, that is to say, about six o'clock, screams of murder coming from the Hunter mansion attracted the attention of a policeman who was patrolling Fifth avenue, and running in that direction, he saw two young men standing in their night clothes on the stoop.

"Come in!" they shouted. "Father's been murdered!"

He hurriedly entered the house, and going up-stairs, was shown by the distracted young men the mangled remains of their father stretched on the floor of the front room.

In addition to the ordinary furniture of the room, there was a writing-desk and a small safe. The door of the latter stood wide open. The key was missing.

Inquiry revealed the fact that it was William Hunter who discovered the body, and his cry had aroused his brother Frederick. The latter rushed into the room and knelt beside the body to ascertain if life was extinct.

This explanation was made to the coroner to account for Frederick's night-shirt being smeared with blood.

The policemen summoned by the young men found in the hall an instrument known as a carpenter's "dog"—a bar of iron about eighteen-inches long, turned down and sharpened at each end, somewhat in the shape of a staple.

"The incised wounds were made with the sharp end, and the other injuries were caused by the blunt angle," decided the coroner when looking over the affair before the inquest was begun.

"Quite right!" agreed the police inspector, who accompanied the coroner. "Quite right, sir; but does that suggest nothing to you?"

"Well, no, I can't say that it does."

"Then I shall be careful not to do so—at present. Instead, let me tell you that that 'dog' is a tool often used by workmen in building, and may have been in this house for years.

"Now, on the other hand, it is certainly not the kind of a weapon that a deliberate assassin or professional burglar would have carried with him.

"Another thing. Whoever committed the crime was thoroughly acquainted with the premises—or was guided by somebody who was. No one else could have so completely covered up his tracks."

A light began to dawn upon the coroner—an awful, horrible light which caused him to whisper the question:

"You don't mean to—"

"I don't mean anything, except that I'm going to sift this matter to the very bottom!" interrupted the inspector, adding:

"But, it would be as well to bear in mind that the body was discovered by one of the handsomest and most popular young men in the best New York society—consequently one requiring a very deep purse.

"And, still another thing. Mrs. Hunter being in the country there are but two servants—the housekeeper, and a man who has been here for so many years that Mr. Hunter trusted him as much as either of his sons.

"These two servants sleep on the top floor. Underneath sleep William and Frederick Hunter, and underneath, again, the murder was committed.

"There is every indication of a desperate

struggle, yet none of these people heard any unusual noise."

"I see what you mean," muttered the coroner.

"I've already told you that I don't mean anything except to do my duty!" sharply corrected the inspector, adding:

"And it will be as well not to dwell too much on whatever I've said may suggest. It might give the murderer a hint to quit."

CHAPTER II.

DARING DAVE DUNCAN.

"MURDERED, of course, but why, and by whom?"

The speaker was a slender, unobtrusive-looking young man of twenty-five, or thereabouts, by profession a detective, and by name Duncan—"Daring Dave" his friends called him.

The detective was standing in the room in which Benjamin Hunter, the wealthy banker and broker, had been murdered the previous night.

"A very mysterious affair," continued Duncan, who was alone in the room. "A very mysterious affair, indeed, where a man is murdered, and evidently after a struggle, and yet neither his two sons, nor the housekeeper, nor the man-servant, heard any noise."

Nothing in the room had been disturbed from the moment the body was discovered until the arrival of the police and coroner, but after the inquest had been held no further care was observed, and when the private man-hunter arrived on the scene, the room had been cleaned and the furniture arranged.

"Worse and worse!" muttered the detective, observing the rearrangement of the furniture—the newspapers having described the room as being in a greatly disordered state.

The coroner's jury had rendered a verdict of murder against party or parties unknown, and immediately after heavy rewards were offered by the Stock Exchange, by the mayor, and by the widow of the murdered man.

"Poor prospects of my ever claiming any part of that money," soliloquized the detective, as having glanced around the room once more, he started to leave the house.

On the stairs he met Fred Hunter, one of the murdered man's sons.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked the young man.

"There is nothing to say—nothing more than the newspapers have said," answered the quiet man, adding:

"Everything in that room is in its proper place, and all traces of the crime being removed, there is no opportunity of forming any opinion, based on the appearance of the room."

"Then you do not feel very hopeful of earning any of the enormous rewards which are offered?"

"No; not very hopeful."

"Ah!"

Young Hunter uttered the monosyllable in a tone which sounded curiously like relief, as the observant man-hunter noted with astonishment, and it caused a strange—a most improbable idea, to enter his mind.

Why should this young man feel relieved, because his father's murder promised to be a difficult matter to bring home to the guilty party?

"Pshaw! I must have been mistaken!" declared Duncan, as he left the house.

"This is the good young man—the model son. If it were the other, now, there might be some reason for suspicion.

"Fred sticks to business like a leech; has no visible vices, and has from all accounts shown himself a good son, for the father swore by him.

"Will, on the other hand, gave no heed to

business; drinks some, and gambles on the green, as his father and brother did on "Change."

Thus musing, the man-hunter slowly strolled up-town, the last man on Broadway who would be taken for a detective.

"Well, I suppose there's no use worrying over it, though I might have found some clue if that room had been allowed to remain as it was before the inquest—"

"Hello! There's Will Hunter, now—and drinking, too!"

The detective had just entered the bar of one of the big hotels when he thus suddenly interrupted himself on beholding the elder son of the murdered banker.

William Hunter was a fine looking young man of about twenty-eight. Always elegantly attired, and always well supplied with money, he was well known about town, and bore the reputation of being a "jolly good fellow."

Just at present, Will Hunter was attracting considerable attention.

Rumor was already at work, connecting the young banker's name with the old banker's murder, and within a half minute after entering the bar, Dave Duncan realized that young Hunter was suspected of having had a hand in his father's death.

"By Jove! They have two Central Office men shadowing him!" mentally commented Duncan as his eyes fell upon two police detectives whom he recognized.

Will Hunter looked worried—suspiciously so, and Duncan felt inclined to join in the suspicion already growing against the young man, but within a very few minutes the inclination was quelled.

"No, he is not the man," decided the detective as he left the bar, after listening for a few minutes to the conversation going on about him concerning the murder, and the actions of young Hunter since, and just prior to the affair.

"They were continually quarreling about money matters," one of the bar-room loungers had remarked.

"So I've heard," assented another, adding:

"And the pretty girl who helps to spend his money, as well as keep him from business, formed another bone of contention between them, I've been told."

"It looks pretty queer—black, in fact, against him," declared the first speaker.

"It does; for the servants, and the brother, have accounted for their movements until the old man himself came home near midnight, but Will has admitted returning much later, and according to the doctors, about the time his father was being murdered," added the other.

"Yes; and everything goes to prove that, if an outsider committed the crime, it must have been with the connivance of one of the people in the house, for there were no signs of forcible entrance."

"Nevertheless I do not believe Will Hunter had anything to do with the murder," muttered the man-hunter as he left the hotel.

Why?

Had anybody asked the question, the detective would have found it difficult to give a satisfactory answer, and before another twenty-four hours had elapsed, the opinion expressed by the bar-room loungers was the prevailing one throughout the city.

The general complexion of the case was decidedly black against Will Hunter, and he appeared to be the only person oblivious of the fact.

"He will be arrested after the funeral is over," was the general opinion, followed by an equally general outcry because the day following the interment of Benjamin Hunter found his son William still a free man.

"A poor man would be in jail," was the cry of press and people.

This was, probably, true; but sitting in his office reading a newspaper which came

out rather strong with this assertion, Dave Duncan shook his head doubtfully as he muttered:

"You are wrong, gentlemen. Will Hunter had nothing to do with it."

As the detective uttered the words, his office-boy entered, and announced:

"Gentleman to see you, sir—won't give his name."

There was nothing strange about the refusal of the visitor's name, and the man-hunter ordered:

"Send him in!"

A moment later, William Hunter was standing before the detective.

CHAPTER III.

THE NEW CLIENT.

"THE general outcry has reached, and aroused him," thought Duncan, on beholding in his visitor the very man he had been speaking of.

He was right, but it was not directly through the newspapers that William Hunter had been stirred into action.

Immediately after returning from his father's funeral, William Hunter received a letter reading as follows:

"Apparently, you are unaware, or careless, of the way your name is being connected with the death of your father, and I feel it my duty to call your attention to the insinuation that you are drinking to drown remorse!"

"Read the newspapers."

There was no signature, nor was any needed; for, though the writing was not particularly familiar, it was enough so, to cause the astonished young man to exclaim:

"Nellie Butler! Can it be possible that—Yes, it is her stationery. I know it. She has it made to order."

The Miss Butler referred to was a young lady with whom Will Hunter had quarreled several months previous to the opening of our story, after a very brief engagement.

Mr. Hunter was astonished at receiving the letter from Miss Butler, because the latter had refused to recognize him from the day the engagement was broken; but the letter set him thinking—with the result that next day he called on Detective Duncan as above stated.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?" asked the detective.

"I don't know whether you can do anything; but I'm anxious you should try, and am willing to pay well for the effort."

The visitor spoke slowly, thoughtfully, at the same time taking from his pocket the letter which had aroused him, and placing this before Duncan continued:

"You know me, I presume?"

The detective nodded.

"Well, that is a letter which I received last night, and which awakened me to a realization of the fact that I am suspected of the murder of my father. Read it."

Duncan glanced at the note, and then at Hunter, saying:

"This is from a friend—and one you know, I presume?"

"Yes," asserted the visitor, coloring slightly, and thereby causing the keen-eyed man-hunter, to mentally declare:

"Just what I thought, the man actually blushed because the letter comes from a lady."

"All the money he has spent, and all the knocking round he has done, hasn't spoiled him, yet."

Unconscious of the good impression he had created, Hunter, meantime, was saying:

"You have doubtless heard what that note hints at, and it is to clear me of that vile charge that I wish to employ you."

"Which means that the murder must be

proved against somebody else," remarked Duncan, adding:

"And, to do that will be difficult, or otherwise, according to what you can tell me."

"I told all I knew at the inquest," declared Hunter.

The detective—without appearing to do so—shot a lightning-like glance at his would-be client, who after a few moments' silence, continued:

"If you can think of anything that I might possibly have forgotten, why fire away with your questions, for there's no use denying that I was pretty well mixed-up the morning the inquest was held."

"Oh, there's no trouble about finding questions to ask. The trouble is, can you, and will you, answer them?"

"All that I can answer, I will. It's easier to answer you than a police justice, and from the fact that I was shadowed by two Headquarters men this morning, it looks as if I would have a chance to do that before long."

The suspected man spoke calmly, but it was a desperate calmness, and the unusually pale face, flashing eyes and compressed lips plainly revealed how bitterly he felt and resented the cruel suspicion now being almost openly expressed regarding the Hunter murder.

"Murderer indeed—bah!" mentally ejaculated Duncan, and aloud:

"Very good, Mr. Hunter. Tell me what you know and suspect, and I'll guarantee to put the blame where it belongs."

"Now, to begin with, what time did you get home that night?"

"About two, I think. It may have been a little later, but it was, certainly, between two and three."

"Heard nor saw anything unusual?"

"Nothing."

"I fell asleep as soon as I reached my room, and did not awake until about six o'clock."

"Good! That's all straightforward, but how about the others, Mr. Hunter?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, you know everything points to the theory upon which you are beginning to be hounded: that the murder was committed either by, or through the connivance of an inmate of the house."

"You have had quarrels with your father over various matters, and that's why they have selected you— But have you no suspicion as to the murderer?"

"No; I can't say that I suspect anybody," replied Hunter in a thoughtful tone, adding:

"It is true there were frequent disputes between my father and myself, for, as is claimed, I was careless about business, but there was no open rupture between us."

"And the servants—are they above suspicion?"

"I would as soon suspect my brother!" was the prompt response.

"And he, of course, is above the breath of suspicion?" slyly suggested Duncan.

"Why, certainly!" indignantly exclaimed the client. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. There is, apparently, no doubt that, if the crime was committed by outsiders, they were admitted to the house, and, therefore, some of the four remaining inmates was a party to the murder."

"You are suspected by the police—that is quite evident; but, if I am to prove you innocent, and you declare the two servants as much above suspicion as your brother, there appears no reason why all three should not be looked after."

William Hunter looked rather bewildered at this, and before he recovered himself, Duncan continued:

"From all I know, or can learn, the inquiry is narrowed down to three people, and before looking elsewhere I shall go for them."

"But you surely cannot suspect—" began the client, when the man-hunter interrupted:

"Mr. Hunter, I must conduct this case in my own way, or not at all!"

"Very well, do as you think best," agreed the other, and asked:

"What shall I pay you?"

"Nothing now; wait till I make a report."

CHAPTER IV.

A DISCOMFITED DETECTIVE.

FOR a week following his consultation with the quiet little man sometimes called Daring Dave Duncan, William Hunter impatiently awaited a report.

During that week he remained at home nearly all the time, and, when he did go out, did not visit any of his former haunts.

One afternoon while taking a stroll, he met Miss Butler and because of the warning letter would have stopped to speak to her, but the young lady swept by with a look which plainly forbade his addressing her.

"What the deuce does that mean?" wondered the astonished young man, sorely puzzled by the actions of Miss Butler.

"Though it may be that she noticed those two fellows who are constantly dogging me," he muttered, referring to the detectives who had been shadowing him ever since the murder.

A little further on, Hunter met another member of the Butler household—Jessie Spencer, a cousin of the other.

This young lady, unlike her cousin, greeted Hunter with a pleasant smile, and after a few sympathetic words, suddenly asked:

"But why are you not looking after your business, Mr. Hunter?"

"Even the mere pretense of business would tend to divert your thoughts from this terrible affair," she hastily added, while coloring a little under the amazed stare fixed upon her.

"I am not attending to business, Miss Spencer, but"—forming a sudden resolution—"the best way I can show my appreciation of your kindness is to do so, and I shall begin to-morrow."

"Another thing," he continued, "I find there is a monstrous suspicion against me. To clear that away I've engaged a detective and am expecting a report from him every hour."

The color on the girl's face deepened, and with a hasty wish that he would find the change beneficial, she left him—as much puzzled by her kindness as her cousin's coldness.

"Know her, Steve?" asked one of the shadows as the girl passed the corner where they were loitering.

"Yes, she's a daughter of Spencer who was a partner of Butler's. Firm busted just before Spencer kicked the bucket—guess it killed him—and she's been living with Butler since. He and Spencer married sisters, but this girl's mother's been dead for many years."

"But this Butler's well fixed, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes. There's always something out of a big wreck, and he's worth more to-day than before Butler & Spencer went up."

"Then this girl must have got something out of it?"

"No, I don't think she's got a dollar. The creditors gave him a chance, and he did pull himself together with a rush, but I guess she's little better than an unpaid servant—may be a companion to Butler's daughter—"

"Hello! There goes our man into Blank House," interrupted the other detective.

"Going to break out again. You go in and see what he's up to; I'll stay outside," directed Steve.

The latter was nearly correct in defining Miss Spencer's position in the Butler household, but wrong in saying she had no money, for through her mother she had an income just about sufficient to clothe her.

Leaving Miss Spencer and her affairs for the present, we will precede the official sleuth-hounds in ascertaining what William Hunter was "up to" in the Blank House.

It was not to the bar the suspected murderer was bound, (as the detectives supposed,) but to the telegraph office, and by the time this fact was discovered the following message had been sent to Mr. David Duncan:

"Anxiously awaiting your report. Let me hear from you immediately."

"And, now, I guess I'll go home and stay there until he calls," thought Hunter as he left the office.

It was not to be, however, for as he stepped into the hall one of his friends met, and exchanged a few words with him.

"Steve's" partner, meantime, having discovered that his man neither was nor had been at the bar, hurried to the street, but "Steve," of course, had seen nothing of Hunter.

"You stay here," directed Steve, "I'll find him in a few minutes."

He did, too, for just as he entered the corridor Hunter's friend had left him, and the former appeared to be coming out of the telegraph office.

"Ha! Been sending a message, eh?" muttered the detective, and as he hurried to the office:

"I must see that message! Morris [his partner] will take care of him."

Entering the office, he found the operator sending off the last of several messages which had been received before and after Hunter's, and demanded:

"Is that the last message you received?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let me see it!"

The operator laughed, and continued sending the telegram.

"Stop that!" ordered the detective, and displaying his shield, angrily explained: "I'm an officer, and that message must be held until I've seen it!"

The operator hesitated a moment, glanced at the shield, and then at the message, and then handed over the latter, protesting:

"It's in direct violation of the rules, sir, and I'm liable to lose my job."

Paying no attention to the protest, the detective glanced eagerly at the message, and a smile of triumph lighted up his countenance as he read:

"Meet me at Jersey City depot eleven-thirty to-night."

The message was addressed to a notorious—rather than celebrated—criminal lawyer, and was signed "Green"—but the signature amounted to nothing.

"It's a name agreed upon. He's getting uneasy, and will probably skip—or rather try to skip—to-night."

Thus the hunter as, having handed back the telegram, he hurried after his partner and their "game."

He was not a particularly stupid man in his profession, but he was taking too much for granted, and on gaining the sidewalk, and failing to see either Hunter or his comrade, he made another blunder when concluding:

"Gone home to pack up, I suppose. Well, Morris is with him (though he's safe enough until after ten o'clock), so as there's no use of two wasting time, I'll have a game of billiards, and then go down to the office."

"It's a big thing for us, by George! Wouldn't be surprised if he'd break down when we put a stopper on that trip."

Thus soliloquizing, the self-satisfied detective turned into a nearby billiard parlor.

A couple hours later, Detective "Steve" Morgan was in consultation with his chief, who was much pleased to hear of his subordinate's discovery of the intended flight of the suspected murderer, and who ordered:

"Don't show your hand until he's about to board the train. This may end by his coming back after consulting Lowe."

"All right, sir."

"Better join Morris, now," directed the chief, and Morgan started for the Hunter residence.

Although he started off promptly, the detective stopped at several places on the way, and did not arrive at his destination until after nine o'clock.

"Where the deuce is Morris?" he muttered, looking vainly for his partner at and about the place where they were accustomed to meet and keep watch for the appearance of William Hunter.

"Can't be possible he left the house unguarded!" continued the surprised detective, and then, as the idea occurred to him:

"By George, it would be rough if they had started for Jersey. He'd get all the credit of the arrest, though I did euchre him out of all credit on the telegram."

"Then again, instead of stopping Hunter, he might take the train—and that would get me into a nice scrape."

Morgan instantly hit upon a plan which would (so he imagined), not only get him out of the threatened difficulty, but give him a fighting chance to at least share in the credit of arresting the suspected man—and the profit, too, if the latter made a confession.

Calling a messenger-boy who happened to be passing, the detective said:

"Here, sonny, run across the street and ask if Mr. William Hunter's in. If he is, say a gentleman sent you from the 'Fifth Avenue,' and will call himself in a few minutes. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Look sharp, now, and meet me at the corner. It's worth a quarter."

The boy darted across the street, and Morgan walked to the corner, where the former met him within five minutes reporting:

"Not in, sir."

"Good!" exclaimed the detective, and handing the boy the promised quarter, jumped on a car, muttering:

"I'll be there long before the lawyer, for it's not ten, so I'll be in for a share, if not all, of the gold and the glory."

At just eleven o'clock, Morgan stood in the Pennsylvania depot, Jersey City, and spent a bad quarter of an hour looking for Hunter and Morris.

At 11:15, the lawyer entered, looked around the waiting-room, and, then at the clock, after which he sat down, causing Morgan to utter a much relieved:

"It's all right! Hunter is around, and Morris is looking after him."

But it was all wrong, for at precisely 11:30 a man whom the detective had never before seen entered the waiting-room and shook hands with the lawyer who jumped up and advanced to meet the new-comer.

At 12 o'clock, the lawyer and "Green" took the midnight Express for Washington, and Detective Morgan returned to New York.

"Three bad breaks in one day—yes, four, for how can I face the 'super'?" he asked himself as he stepped off the boat on the New York side.

Hoping against hope, the discomfited detective hurried to the rendezvous opposite the Hunter residence, but there was no Morris to be seen, and shortly after daylight when the man-servant came out to wash off the sidewalk, the now desperately-anxious watcher, putting a bold face on the matter, crossed over and asked:

"Would it be possible to see Mr. William Hunter at this hour?"

"No, sir, for he isn't home," replied the man, glancing curiously at the inquirer, and adding:

"He's not been home since yesterday afternoon."

CHAPTER V.

MISSING—QUEER COMMENTS—STRANGE DISCOVERY.

AFTER this information the detective decided to have some breakfast, and then come back to the rendezvous.

"That fellow must have shown me the wrong telegram," he muttered—and rightly, too, but wrongly added:

"Morris has been knocking around all night with Hunter, so I mustn't be long away or he'll be sending to the office after me—for they're sure to be getting back pretty soon."

It required fully twelve tiresome hours of watching to convince the man-hunter that he was mistaken.

It was six o'clock in the afternoon before Morgan arrived at this conclusion, and dispatched a messenger to Headquarters for a man to relieve him—having been thirty-six hours without rest.

The relief arrived promptly, bearing a message for Morgan which directed the latter to report, at once, at the residence of the superintendent.

Just what the discomfited detective reported matters little, as we are practically through with him, but the ubiquitous reporter had not been idle, and the next day's papers hinted in the morning, and boldly asserted in the evening, that William Hunter was a fugitive.

How the news had leaked out nobody knew, but the fact that the suspected man had been missing for forty-eight hours, appeared to be as well known to the newspapers as the police.

Three times during the previous day, detective Morgan had noticed a strange caller at the Hunter residence, but though each time looking a different person, it was the same man all the same—Dave Duncan.

"Strange—very strange!" soliloquized Duncan as he read in the evening paper a confirmation (?) of what had been hinted at that morning.

"I'd stake my life on that man's innocence! He's a pretty high-strung fellow, and not hearing from me, and hounded by the press and police, he may have become quite uneasy. I'll have to look him up."

"Good!" exclaimed the missing man's brother as he glanced at the evening newspaper. "That covers everything, and he is no worse off. Public opinion had already condemned him and he was liable to arrest at any moment, so, he's well out of the way—for his own sake, and a great deal better for mine, even though it does convict him."

The model young man smiled wickedly as he uttered the last words, and then glancing at his watch, continued:

"It was a good idea and well carried out."

"Now, I am free to do as I please, and I must keep that man Price on the lookout for interference by the police, and the private Hawkshaws as well."

It was now about eight o'clock, and the model young banker, who had remained in his office long after the usual business hours, rung, and on the appearance of the solitary man-servant announced himself in readiness to dine.

The response to the bell had been very rapid—suspiciously so, it struck Mr. Fred Hunter, who when the servant quitted the room, muttered:

"I don't like that fellow, Williams. I'll get rid of him! He looks and acts infernally suspicious—and what did he mean by that look?"

"Well, he knows nothing, but it's better he should go. He makes me uneasy."

When cautious men do blunder, they blunder terribly.

Mr. Fred Hunter was an exceedingly cautious man, but it would have been much wiser had he not given utterance to his thoughts, for as he advanced toward the door at the conclusion of the last sentence, "Will-

iams" fled from the keyhole—first shaking his fist at the door, and hissing as he turned to go below:

"You hypocritical villain!"

A minute or two later, the young banker entered the dining-room where Williams waited upon him in silence until the simple repast which had been prepared by the housekeeper—the cook being in the country with Mrs. Hunter—was finished. Then, the young man said:

"Williams, you've been a long time with the family?"

"Twenty years, sir."

"And are getting pretty old?"

"Only fifty-eight, sir"—deprecatingly.

"Hum. Well—as you please about that."

"What I was thinking of in speaking of your age and long service here, was your connection with my father and his liking and confidence in you."

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, you know, of course, that my mother has been completely prostrated by the recent trouble here, and—well, it has occurred to me that your presence here on her return would revive unpleasant memories, so—ah—so, I've concluded—"

"That it would be best for me not to be here?" suggested Williams as the young man paused, apparently at loss how to express those very words—in a more delicate way.

The master shot a suspicious glance at the man. Respectfully as the words were suggested there was something in the tone which the former disliked.

"That is not the way I wished to express it, but it covers my idea—partly. There is something more, however. From the moment you secure another employer, you will receive half your present salary—which is, I believe, about double that ordinarily paid men in your position."

"Yes, sir; Mr. Hunter was very kind to me."

"I hope you do not consider this proposition to pension you as otherwise than kindness?" sharply questioned the young man.

"Oh, no, sir! How could I be so ungrateful?"

But, again there was something unsatisfactory in the servant's tone, and the master spoke more sharply when he left the dining-room, warning:

"Better attend to the matter immediately, for the house may be closed up any day if my mother should decide to go abroad."

"I'll attend to it, sir," assured Williams, and when the other was out of ear-shot, added: "And to you, too, my lad!"

"I believe that old rascal would be dangerous if he knew anything, but he doesn't, and I have him started for the street, so it's all right," muttered Mr. Hunter to himself.

On reaching his room the young banker had bolted the door, but that did not prevent Williams from using the keyhole a few minutes later.

What the spying servant saw was of a character to confirm his opinion that Mr. Frederic Hunter was a magnificent fraud—a hypocrite of the first water.

"Ha, ha! Now, I've got you!" muttered Williams as he beheld the young banker complacently surveying himself in a mirror, his effeminately handsome, beardless face now adorned with a pair of whiskers and a mustache.

"Yes, that will do," murmured the young man after a few minutes, and removing the false beard placed it in a small box which he slipped into the pocket of his light overcoat.

"He's going out," decided Williams, observing the light overcoat thrown over a chair. "I'll go, too."

Had the spy waited one minute longer he would have seen his employer unlock one of his bureau drawers, from which he took another false beard.

There was a grate in the room, but no fire, nor the means of making one, and, after

hesitating a moment or two, Hunter placed this beard, too, in the overcoat, evidently abandoning his intention of burning it.

Then putting on a light colored soft hat, and throwing his overcoat over his arm, Mr. Frederic Hunter left the house.

Half a minute later, Mr. Williams passed out of the basement door, and began dogging his employer.

At the same moment a man who had been standing directly opposite, crossed the street and fell in behind Mr. Williams.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIOUS FRENCHMAN.

LEAVING shadowed and shadowers for the present, we will accompany Daring Dave Duncan in his work of "looking up" the missing Mr. William Hunter.

Ever prompt to act, the private detective picked up his hat, and left his office, immediately after declaring his intention of searching for his client.

"That telegram came from the Blank House, and it is there I must look to pick up his trail," he decided, taking his way toward the hotel referred to.

Although casually acquainted with a great many, few people outside of those who had employed him, had any suspicion of Duncan's business.

Of those who did know him as a detective, the clerk of the Blank House was one, and to that affable gentleman Duncan applied for information, saying:

"Well, Mr. Parker, what have you done with Will Hunter?"

"I'm afraid you've got me," was the laughing reply.

"Well, this is the last place he was seen," retorted the detective.

"Oh, no! You're away off there. I happen to know that he made, and kept, an appointment to meet a certain gentleman at Considine's an hour after he left here— And, by the way, there's the man himself!"

As the clerk interrupted himself, he nodded toward an elegantly dressed gentleman who passed through the corridor.

"Now, how about this being the last place in which Will Hunter was seen?" bantered the clerk.

"You gentlemen behind the desk seem to know everything, as well as everybody. How the deuce you know the appointment was kept—or anything at all about it, beats me!"

"Are you a mind-reader?"

"No, no! Not as bad as that, Duncan. I happened to be standing outside the desk, and saw Will Hunter meet Cartier outside the telegraph office."

"They parted after a few words, and Hunter started to go out but turned back, and asked me to tell Cartier that he had changed his mind, and would meet him at Considine's in an hour."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Now, I understand your apparent mind-reading."

"Why didn't he tell Cartier himself? And, how do you know the appointment was kept?"

"First, though least important, I imagine that Hunter's reason for leaving the message with me was because he didn't care to go into the bar—he hasn't been there for over a week, you know."

(Duncan did not know, but was glad to hear of his client's abstinence on the day of his disappearance.)

"Second," continued Parker, "I was in Considine's for a few minutes that evening and saw Hunter and Cartier together—the former winning heavily—so, I know the appointment was kept."

The keen-witted man-hunter left the desk hugging himself with delight, for he had in a few minutes managed to learn more than the whole police force and newspaper reporters had in forty-eight hours!

Cartier, as Duncan was well aware, was as great a mystery to the people with whom he came in contact as he himself was, with the difference, however, that while a great many people worried themselves about the former, very few bothered their heads about the latter.

The man-hunter had himself become interested in the mysterious Frenchman, and had only refrained from satisfying his curiosity because of lack of time. Now, it became necessary to do so, and he was glad of the necessity.

Sauntering into and through the bar, Duncan found that the bird had flown.

"He went out this way—probably gone home," was his mental comment.

It was about eight o'clock when Duncan left the Blank House and strolled in the direction of Cartier's residence, which the former had accidentally discovered adjoined that of the Hunter family.

"Wonder if he did go home?" soliloquized the detective, as he stood opposite the mysterious Frenchman's house. "Well, I might as well find out at once," he decided, and crossing over rung the bell.

"Yes, Mr. Cartier was in," the servant who came to the door informed him.

"Mr. Albert Cartier?"

"Oh, no! There is only one Mr. Cartier here, and his name is Paul," answered the servant, and murmuring something about "wrong address," Duncan thanked her, and resumed his station across the street.

Thinking deeply over the case in hand, trying to account for the disappearance of Will Hunter in some way other than flight through fear of arrest, as well as to remember all that he had heard regarding Paul Cartier, the detective did not feel the time passing until a neighboring church clock struck nine.

"By Jove! That fellow is taking his time," he muttered, but had hardly uttered the words when Fred Hunter followed by Williams made their appearance.

A keen observer—the first requisite in a great detective, Duncan saw in an instant that the young banker was being shadowed.

"That's queer!" he commented; "guess I'll take a hand in that game myself. The other fellow can wait until to-morrow."

Crossing over, the man-hunter dropped in behind Williams, rather amused at the idea of shadowing a shadow, though quite at sea as to the identity of the latter.

Although he had called three times at the Hunter residence, Duncan had seen Williams but once. That, however, was sufficient; for when the shadowing servant came into the glare of an electric, on reaching Broadway, he was recognized.

Half a minute previous, Duncan made the somewhat startling discovery that he himself was being shadowed!

"Wonder how many of us are in line?" he muttered, rather amused over the discovery.

"Now, what does this fellow know that leads him to shadow his employer? I must cultivate his acquaintance.

"First, however, I must have a look at this fellow behind, and find out whether it's me or them he is after."

To an expert like the speaker, this was merely a question of how it could be done easiest and least likely to alarm his shadow.

All along the curb of the block they were then in was a string of cabs, the doors of most of them thrown open, and these suggested an old plan which was instantly executed.

Jumping into a cab, Duncan quickly opened and passed through the other door which he closed after him, and then awaited results.

The wait was a short one. Within a quarter of a minute a man stood hesitating before the cab, thus attracting the attention

of the driver, who was standing a few yards away conversing with another cab-driver.

"Keb, sir?" cried the night-hawk rushing to his rig.

"No, I thought I saw a friend of mine get into this cab a few moments ago.

"Well, he didn't, see!" was the savage reply, for the driver felt hurt over the disappointment.

"Cartier, by all that's good!" exclaimed Duncan, who, watching from the other side, saw and heard what was going on.

"Now, Mr. Cartier, what have you been doing that causes this shadowing me?"

CHAPTER VII.

DUNCAN PLAYS A NEW ROLE.

WHEN Duncan called at Cartier's residence he bore his usual "business" appearance—that is, he wore a full beard, which being of an iron gray color, made him look like a man of forty-five to fifty.

While Cartier was speaking to the cab-driver, the man-hunter removed the beard, and threw away the stiff hat he was wearing, substituting for it a light-colored "pocket" hat.

This, of course, was hardly a half minute's work, and when the now doubly mysterious Frenchman hurried away, the detective was close behind him, murmuring as he started:

"Great thing to be in disguise, instead of having to get into one."

Cartier was pushing his way through the crowd at a lively rate, looking right and left all the time, causing his shadow, now, to observe:

"Looking pretty sharp for fear he'll pass me.

"Hello! He's easing up—what does that mean?"—and the man-hunter stopped chuckling long enough to ascertain the cause.

"Oh, I see! Caught up with the Hunter party, and wonders where I am."

A crowd was nothing to this man. He seemed able to look right through the people intervening between himself and his object.

In this case he could see the Frenchman slacken his speed, and from the latter's uncertain movements deduced what afterward proved the facts as he had expressed them.

At the next corner, Fred Hunter turned into a side street, each of the shadows in turn following suit and the last one murmuring:

"Considine's, or I'm a dough-head!"

The last word was barely uttered when Hunter entered the doorway leading to the gambling-rooms.

Williams passed on, but Cartier followed the young banker, and was admitted at the same time as the latter.

Duncan halted near the corner to see what the shadowing servant would do, feeling quite certain that the latter would turn back, but in doubt as to whether he would risk entering the gambling-house.

As expected, Williams returned within five minutes, stood hesitating at the doorway nearly five more, and then entered.

"Wonder what kind of a place he thinks it is?" thought the detective, as he followed Williams into the hallway.

There was the regulation grated iron door at the foot of the stairs, and an electric bell to summon an attendant from above, but Williams apparently did not dare make use of it.

"Would you please tell me what kind of a place this is?" he asked when Duncan entered.

"Certainly! This is Considine's, and everybody knows it's a gambling-house."

"Ha! A gambling-house, eh? Now—"

Williams stopped short, looking rather confused, and turned toward the door.

"What, not going up?" exclaimed Duncan.

"No, not to-night,"—and Williams hurried

away, while the detective pressed the button, and a minute later was admitted, being well known in his character of a man about town.

Upstairs, a rapid survey of the tables revealed Cartier watching a young man who had just sat down at the faro table.

"Ah! That's the servant's man," thought Duncan, and, then, catching a side view of the young banker's beard wondered if he was not mistaken.

Stepping into the circle of spectators standing around the gamblers, and directly behind the object of Cartier's attention, the keen-eyed detective quickly discovered that the beard was false, and detected the identity of the wearer.

Hunter was winning heavily within five minutes after sitting down, and this gave color to the remark which Duncan addressed to an attendant at the buffet:

"There don't seem to be much for the house in admitting strangers. How did you come to let him in, Sam?"

"Oh, he ain't no stranger, sah. He's a 'high roller,' too, 'n' loses moah times 'n' he wins."

"Why, I never saw him here before. By the way, Sam, I forgot something last time I was here."

The dollar which found its way into the darky's hand as the speaker finished, proved wonderfully effective in loosening his tongue, though, had Sam suspected that that was the object, he would not have been so communicative.

So to testify his gratitude to the gentleman who seldom played, but invariably gave a dollar, the darky continued:

"Yaas, sah, he's a reg'lar pattern (patron), but doan't come till one 'r two o'clock—though he ain't been here lately, that's a fact—not sence the night o' the murder!"

"Confound it! There goes my theory," was the listener's mental comment, but on the *nil desperandum* plan observed:

"You must have a pretty good memory to fix the date of any particular man's visit—among so many."

"Yaas, sah, but ye git used t' it after a while. I rec'lect Mr. G— kem in jist 'bout one, dropped 'bout five hundred 'n' left 'bout two, 'r a little after, mebbe."

"Hum! Not so bad, after all. He still had time to be in it," reflected Duncan, and then, happening to glance toward Cartier, was struck by the look of intense interest with which the Frenchman was watching the young banker.

"Odd!" he muttered, and with a compliment to Sam on his memory, returned to his former post behind Hunter's chair.

The room was warm, and on sitting down the young banker had thrown his coat in a careless fashion over the back of his chair.

As the lynx-eyed hunter of men approached the faro table, he observed three things:

First: the hypocritical young banker was continuing to win heavily, and becoming for that reason somewhat excited.

Second: that in moving about on his chair, the light overcoat had been so disarranged that the pockets had been turned almost upside down, as well as outward.

Third—and most important—that there was something hairy sticking out of one pocket.

The hairy object was, of course, the false beard taken by Hunter from the bureau.

It took Duncan just about one half-minute to guess the truth, and nearly as long to decide that he must have the beard.

As expert a pickpocket as any thief that ever "swiped a super," the detective quickly and deftly transferred the beard from the banker's pocket to his own.

It was still quite early, and had he left immediately Duncan might have escaped trouble, for although neither the owner of the beard, nor those on either side of him,

had noticed the act, a man some ten feet away had.

The observant spectator was the mysterious Frenchman, but Duncan's movements were so quick that he did not see what was taken.

"A button from that coat would be a handy thing to have," thought the "pick-pocket" and Cartier, who was staring at him in mingled astonishment and suspicion, saw the coveted article cut off and placed with the beard.

Duncan, in his assumed character, was well known by sight to the Frenchman, and when the former happened to glance at the latter and caught the expression of his face, he knew that his actions had been seen.

"Confound the fellow!" muttered the angry man-hunter, who was disgusted with himself for having been caught.

The detective wandered into another room, and remained watching the gamblers there for fully two hours before it occurred to him that it would be as well to keep an eye on Cartier, for fear the latter might begin talking that very night.

Returning to the outer room, Duncan was surprised to find that both Hunter and Cartier had quit the place.

"Two nice blunders inside of two hours," he murmured on discovering that both his men were gone.

He knew where he was pretty certain to find both men next day, although Cartier would receive attention first, because of his meeting with Will Hunter at the gambling-house.

"Well, Sam, your 'high roller' has gone," remarked the detective, as he stopped to get a cigar at the buffet.

"Yaas, sah; goonh some time. I gave him ah note from a gen'l'men here, 'n' he quit right off," explained Sam.

"Sure it wasn't from a lady?" smilingly asked Duncan.

"Shuah! That French gen'l'man gave me a dollah foah takin' it."

"Well, here's another—and good-night to you."

"By Jupiter that sounds queer!" commented Duncan as he left the gambling-house.

"Sent a note to him, eh? Wy didn't he go to him instead of writing?"

"Looks as if there was some connection between those two and that they wish to keep it secret, but they've overdone it."

On leaving Considine's, the man-hunter had turned toward Sixth avenue.

It was midnight, the street dark and silent, and buried in thought, the hunter paid no attention to anything but the game he was tracking.

A short distance below the gambling-house stood a carriage with the driver on the box—nothing unusual in the vicinity of Considine's.

As the detective approached the carriage, the driver spoke to the horses, and at a slow walk they started toward Sixth avenue.

"Tired standing," muttered Duncan, his attention momentarily attracted by the noise, and with down-bent head continued:

"There's something to be carefully sifted in this appointment with Will Hunter, notwithstanding to Fred, and this disguise—"

A stunning blow cut short the detective's reflections, and he would have fallen but for one of the two men who had jumped from the off-side of the carriage, and stealing up behind the thought-engrossed man, struck him senseless.

"In with him—quick!" hissed the man who held Duncan.

The carriage had stopped at the curb, scarce six feet away—the door held open by a third man within—and half a minute later the victim had been picked up and thrown into it like a bundle of rags.

"Bind and gag him!" directed the third man in a tone of authority.

"Guess there ain't no need o' hurryin'," growled one of the ruffians.

"He'll sleep for a good while—if he ever does wake up!" assured the other.

The moment the carriage door was closed, the driver started the horses, and at a rapid rate the party was carried down to Fulton Ferry, which being crossed, the horses proceeded at a still more lively gait through Brooklyn, until as the first streaks of dawn were lighting the horizon, the carriage stopped opposite a tumble-down house, midway between what is called South Brooklyn and Bay Ridge.

"Now take and do with him as you did with the other one," ordered the leader, or employer, of the murderous ruffians, adding:

"I'll see you within twenty-four hours. If anything unusual turns up, telegraph."

CHAPTER VIII.

WITHIN AN INCH OF HIS LIFE.

THE house opposite which the carriage had stopped, was situated about one hundred yards from the road, and almost hidden by trees.

The direction to "do with him as you did with the other one," was followed by the picking up and carrying toward the house of Duncan and departure of the carriage.

With the exception of the order to bind and gag him, in New York, and the one quoted above, in Brooklyn, not a word had been exchanged during the long ride.

This was rather annoying to the man who had almost willingly become a prisoner to the murderous ruffians, for the man-hunter was playing 'possum!

Although buried in thought when the attack was made, the detective had instinctively thrown himself forward, and thus the blow had failed to do its deadly work.

In thus voluntarily submitting to being made prisoner, and risking what might follow, Duncan was giving an exhibition of the wonderful nerve which had gained for him the name of "Daring Dave."

He had heard, and almost unconsciously noted, the stopping of the carriage, and with the attack, like lightning came the thought:

"This is no ordinary robbery! It's Hunter or Cartier—or both!"

And, accordingly, the cunning detective became a mere bundle of flesh and clothing—limp and insensate as the blow should have rendered him; but thus far he had learned nothing.

Now, however, he was to begin to gain something by his nerry trick.

"Why'n thunder didn't he tell us t' pitch him overboard?" growled one of the ruffians, as they carried the (willing) victim toward the house.

"Might as well for he feels like a 'stiff,' anyhow," assented the other.

"Poll says t' other duck's pretty well out of his head," remarked the first speaker, who was carrying Duncan's feet.

"Ought ter be wud the smash he got," returned the other, chuckling like the brutal fiend he was, and adding: "D'ye know who he is?"

"No—d'you?"

"No, 'n' don't care!"

"I do," was the significant rejoinder.

"Why?"—wonderingly.

"Why? Why because it might give us a grip—a chance t' bleed this Frenchman, or whatever he is, by 'n' by."

"Ye'r' right, Dick! Let's try 'n' find out somethin' about him?"

"It's risky business, but I'm goin' t' try it on," asserted Dick, adding:

"Ye know he said we'd never get no more if we tried t' stick our noses inter his business—when we took the job."

"Bluff!"

"Guess so," agreed Dick.

"Know this duck?" he continued.

"No—'n' I don't think he does either."

"Why?"

"Well, I dunno exactly, but it looked as if he was talkin' straight, 'n' he said 'twas on'y t' find out somethin' about this duck, that was wanted."

"It looks more's if 'twas t' get somethin' out of him," continued the ruffian, "for he went through him soon as we chucked him into the carriage."

"Get anythin'?"

"Yes. Couldn't make out what it was though, 'count of its bein' so blamed dark."

Duncan had been a little dazed when thrown into the carriage, and barely noticed that the third man's hand touched his coat-pocket. Now, he realized that the beard was gone, and partly understood the cause of the attack.

But what object had Cartier in recovering the beard?

The detective had noticed that, except once, the ruffians had invariably referred to their confederate and employer as "he," but why should the mysterious Frenchman run any risks to help Fred Hunter?

The house was reached while Duncan was puzzling himself over these questions, and in response to the summons of the ruffian Dick, the party was admitted.

"What, another?" exclaimed a coarse female voice, as the prisoner was unceremoniously dropped on the floor.

"Yes, he'll be company for the other mug," was the reply.

"Then somebody else's got t' look out for him, for I've got all I kin do t' tend the other one," angrily declared the woman.

"Guess this one won't trouble ye long, Poll," soothed Dick. "We'll give ye hand until the boss comes, or sends word for us."

"Take him up 'longside t'other one," she continued, "and you'd better give him a dose o' rum, if yer got any."

In accordance with the woman's suggestion, Duncan's teeth were pried (!) open after he was laid on a bed in a room on the floor above, and some liquor was poured down his throat.

Although the stuff almost choked him the prisoner gave no sign of consciousness, and the ruffians could not see that the effort to repress a fit of coughing sent the blood in waves to his face.

"Ye must've soaked him hard, Nick," remarked Dick.

"Wish I'd soaked him harder!"

"Why?"

"Why? because it looks as if he was goin' t' croak, anyhow, an' if he was finished at first, we could've chucked him inter the river. Then, when he'd be picked up, there wouldn't be no trouble. There ain't no mark on him, 'n' it'd be 'accidental drownin', but, now, if he croaks, we'll have t' bury him—'n' that's allus liable t' show up ag'in' ye."

"That's so," assented Dick, adding:

"But he ain't croaked yet. Hadn't we better loosen him? It'll give the blood a better chance, 'n' there ain't much danger of his gittin' out o' here."

The other nodded moody assent, and the speaker cut the cords binding the detective's legs and arms, remarking as he did so:

"He's as limp as a wet rag."

Duncan was now at liberty to use his limbs; in his pocket was a self-acting seven-shooter, and for a moment he was tempted to make prisoners of the two ruffians (who were completely off their guard.)

A minute later he bitterly regretted not having adopted this course.

"What's the matter wud goin' through him?" exclaimed Dick, turning back at the door.

"Well, we are a couple of chumps!" assentingly declared his confederate, and both returned to the bedside.

It was now too late to reach for his pistol,

even if he wished to do so, but as yet Duncan had no desire to resist the search.

In his character of man-about-town, the detective never carried anything which would betray his business. No cards, nor letters, and his badge could not be found without stripping him.

"Tain't so bad—about a hundred and—" began Dick, who was estimating the value of the jewelry and cash already taken from the prisoner, when he was interrupted by a horrible oath from his confederate, who was doing the searching.

The latter had just reached the detective's pistol-pocket, but with the weapon came something else, and the rattle told Duncan that he had inadvertently allowed a pair of handcuffs to remain in his pocket!

"Look!" hoarsely exclaimed Nick, holding up the bracelets which had adorned the wrists of many a famous felon.

A good detective must be a good actor.

The tigerish ferocity with which that one word "Look!" was uttered, betrayed the deadly intentions of the bloodthirsty speaker, and would have caused nine men out of ten in Duncan's situation to betray themselves.

But the man-hunter never moved a muscle. Like the experienced tiger-hunter when his game gets the upper hand, he remained perfectly quiet—even when, as the eyes of the confederates met, Nick, in the same voice, hoarse with fury, exclaimed:

"Now, he must be finished!"

"All right!" responded his confederate, placing his hand on Duncan's shoulder.

The latter was about to grapple with the ruffian, when the grasp on his shoulder was relaxed, and he heard the question:

"See here, Nick! We're not dead sure about this, 'n' he might kick up a row if we put him out of the way."

"S'pose we tie him up ag'in 'n' wait for the boss?"

"No! We'll finish him now 'n' say he died," was the savage reply, and the speaker raised his murderous weapon—the sandbag.

CHAPTER IX.

FARREL THE FOX.

MISS SPENCER was seated in her room one afternoon, when the door-bell was rung, and a few moments later a servant announced:

"A gentleman to see you, Miss Spencer."

"To see me?" echoed the orphan.

"Yes, miss. He is an old gentleman, and says you wouldn't remember his name—and—"

"Well?" encouraged the girl, as the servant hesitated and looked embarrassed.

"Well, I may be mistaken, but—well, he looks as if it was money he wanted."

Miss Spencer sighed, and bade the girl say she would be down in a few minutes.

Mary invited Miss Spencer's caller into the parlor with as much deference as if he was one of Mr. Butler's millionaire friends—though she had hesitated about allowing him to remain inside the door a few minutes before.

And, certainly, the caller's appearance went far toward justifying the servant's suspicion that he was a beggar. The only things about him which did not look worn out and shabby were his eyes and his shoes.

The former were bright and piercing, and the latter solid and well made.

The clothes and hat looked shabby, and the face, wherever it showed through the ragged white beard, looked worn and wrinkled.

Not an attractive man by any means, nor yet particularly repellent—one upon whom you would not waste a second glance or thought, which was precisely the point aimed at by the old man, for he was a famous detective.

The door of the den which this shabby looking old man called his office, bore a tin sign upon which was barely discernible the

name "Farrel Fox," but none of the many other tenants of the building believed that to be his real name—though many of them, (and especially the young men and boys,) adopted the name to the extent of corrupting it into "Farrel the Fox."

They might better have dubbed him Fox the Bloodhound, for once on a trail he never relinquished it until the "game" was "treed."

So much by way of introduction to the man, who as Miss Spencer entered the parlor, and looked inquiringly toward him, arose and in a low tone asked:

"Miss Spencer?"

And receiving an affirmative reply continued:

"I have a matter of considerable importance to reveal to you concerning yourself, and the family with whom you are living, but it must be in private."

"My uncle and aunt, and my cousin, have gone to the theater, so there is no danger of anybody intruding," assured Miss Spencer, who was, of course, astonished by the strange announcement made by her visitor.

"Very good," quietly commented the latter, glancing at an old-fashioned silver watch, and began:

"First, I must inform you that my name is Fox, and that I am a detective."

"A detective?" exclaimed the girl, starting back in alarm.

"Hush! Not so loud, if you please, for your relatives must be kept in ignorance of my visit, as well as as what I am about to say. As I have told you, I am a detective—a private detective, and, in the course of my business, have recently come across certain information, which leads me to suspect that you were not fairly dealt with in the settlement of the affairs of Butler & Spencer. Now, Miss Spencer, have you any papers which belonged to your father?"

"No, I do not think so. My uncle took charge of all my father's papers, but there may possibly be some which he did not get, because my mother had a bundle of documents in her trunk, some of which, I remember her saying, were in my father's handwriting."

"Where is that bundle?"

"I am not certain whether my uncle took it at the time my mother's will was proved—I think not, because the will, and some other papers, were in the envelope in my mother's desk."

"Can't you find out—without asking your uncle?" asked Fox.

"Oh, yes! If he did not take them, they are still in the old trunk."

"And that is where?"

"In the store-room, they call it, on the top floor—or, perhaps, it was put in the cellar, for it was very old."

"You could ascertain about that bundle of papers by noon to-morrow, could you not—that is, without attracting attention?"

Just as the detective asked the question, a young woman paused at the partly-closed parlor door.

The young woman was Julie—Miss Butler's French maid—the only servant in the house who did not like Jessie Spencer.

Hearing voices in the parlor, curiosity had led the French girl to stop. She heard the question, or enough of it to cause her to continue playing the eavesdropper, and a smile of malicious triumph overspread her countenance as she heard Jessie's confident answer:

"Oh, yes! I can look on the upper floor either before the servants retire to-night, or after they get up to-morrow, and if the trunk isn't there, I can search for it in the cellar while the others are at breakfast."

"Good! Now be careful, Miss Spencer. Do nothing to arouse your uncle's suspicions, but endeavor to find those papers, and bring them to my office as near noon as possible. Here is my address. Be very

careful that you are not observed—especially if you find the papers, for they may prove of great value."

"I will—" began Jessie, and then discovered that she was alone.

So quickly and quietly—so like a fox—had he departed, that the eavesdropper was nearly caught in the act, while Jessie could not realize that he had really gone until she heard the front door closed by her visitor.

Confused by her narrow escape from being caught, Julie had barely a glimpse of the departing visitor, but consoled herself with the thought that Jessie's efforts to avoid observation would be thrown away.

"And I will have a pretty story to tell, even if I cannot describe the man," muttered the malicious Julie, and, then, as the idea struck her:

"But why shouldn't I have a look at these precious papers? It isn't nine yet, and she won't dare come in while I'm there, so I'll have plenty of time to search for them."

CHAPTER X.

MISS SPENCER SHOWS HER SAGACITY.

IMMEDIATELY after the departure of her visitor, Miss Spencer determined to begin the search for her mother's trunk at once.

On ascending to the servants' quarters, however, Jessie saw that the gas was lighted, and hearing somebody moving about within, was compelled to abandon her purpose.

It was the French maid, of course, who was in the store-room adjoining the servants' quarters, and who had lighted all the gas on that floor to warn off the expected interruption, but that shrewd damsel was not quite a match for the well-named Farrel the Fox.

Jessie had not been five minutes in the parlor, after her unsuccessful attempt to enter the servants' quarters, when a messenger-boy arrived with a note reading as follows:

"There was a young woman outside the parlor door when I left. From her actions, she had been eavesdropping. How much she heard is beyond me, but to be on the safe side, do nothing for the next forty-eight hours. "F. F."

"If you can manage it quietly, ascertain the name of the inquisitive young woman."

"Oh, gracious! Who could it have been? Who would be so mean?"

As the guileless Jessie thus expressed her wonder at this instance of human weakness, it suddenly occurred to her that the person "who would be so mean," would be apt to endeavor to profit by what she had overheard, by forestalling her (Jessie) in the search for the trunk.

"And she's up-stairs at this minute! I'll ask Mary about it," concluded Jessie, and summoning the house-maid, innocently inquired if any of the servants was ill.

"Why, no, miss," replied the surprised Mary, "they are all down-stairs except John (the coachman) and that French maid"—with scornful emphasis—"and she thinks herself too good to associate with us, I suppose."

"Oh! That accounts for it," said Jessie, as if thinking aloud, and explained that she had seen a light up stairs.

"It's her, sure enough!" declared Mary. "She doesn't think us fit company for her."

"Well, as I've been making a mountain out of a mole-hill, Mary, please say nothing more about it," requested Jessie.

"Oh, certainly not, as long as you say so," promptly responded the servant, always glad of the slightest opportunity of serving one whom she both loved and pitied.

"Thank you. By the by, Mary, do you remember that old black trunk of mine—the one that was stored away somewhere four or five years ago?"

"To be sure I do, Miss Jessie! Didn't I help you to clear it out?"

"I had forgotten that. Then, there was nothing in it when it was carried up-stairs?"

"No, not that I can remember. But, maybe there was something—a ring or a pin might have got among the old papers, and bits and scraps that were in the bottom."

Plainly the speaker supposed it was a piece of missing jewelry—some memento of earlier and happier days—that Miss Spencer was seeking, and the latter did not undeceive her, saying:

"I should like to look through that trunk, Mary. Do you know where it is?"

"I'm not sure, though I think it's still up-stairs; but, wherever it is, whatever was in it is safe, for you locked it yourself before it was moved out of your room."

"Locked? Then there must be something in it."

"Well, I don't say there isn't, but I'd not be so sure of it."

"I've a reason for wanting to examine it," persisted the girl, "and should like very much if you would help in finding it."

"With all the pleasure in the world! Shall we look for it to-night, miss?"

"No, but you can ascertain whether it's up-stairs before coming down to-morrow morning. If it isn't, then we must look in the cellar—but don't mention it, or let anyone see or know that you are looking for it."

"Oh, you may trust me for that," assured Mary, and when alone Miss Spencer—feeling that she could, as she really did, place implicit confidence in her—very complacently remarked:

"Now I feel relieved, for even if the trunk is up-stairs, it's locked, and if there's anything in it, Julie can't get at it."

We must go back to the time of the Fox's sudden exit through the doorway of the Butler parlor.

As proved by the note sent to Jessie, the detective had caught the French maid eavesdropping, but pretending not to notice her, he hastened to the nearest messenger office, and wrote and dispatched his warning.

"I don't think she could have heard much, if anything," he soliloquized, as he strolled toward Broadway, "but it's better to act as if she had, and any watching done for the next couple of days will be useless."

"If the listener is friendly, forty-eight hours' waiting will do no harm, and if otherwise, that length of time spent in useless watching should be sufficient to throw discredit on whatever story she may tell that rascal Butler."

And having arrived at this satisfactory conclusion, Mr. Fox decided that he was entitled to have something to eat—especially as he had been too busy to think of food since breakfast.

"Strange, strange how these things crop up, no matter how carefully concealed," mused the detective, resuming the train of thought which had been interrupted while he was disposing of a substantial meal.

"Stranger, too, that I should run across the Butler-Spencer rascality while running down the Hunter mystery, for it is a mystery yet, although I'll have the nigger out of the fence before I quit the case—but the Spencer business first."

"I don't see, however, that there is anything to be done just yet. We must await the result of this eavesdropping, before making a move in the Butler-Spencer business, and that means a clear loss of two days."

The veteran detective shook his shaggy white head dubiously, as he contemplated this awful waste of time.

"No, it would be simply sacrilegious to sit idle for two days," he decided, "though I'd willingly do nothing for two years, if it would help that little woman to get even with her rascally uncle."

"Idleness will not help, however, so I might as well change my face, and see what there is in that last Hunter clue."

In the "profession," Farrel Fox was generally known as the "Man of Many Faces."

"Give him a half-minute—long enough to turn his head—and he'll show you a new face," was a common assertion among both police and private detectives.

"And not one of us knows which is the real face," was an occasional admission.

Leaving the quiet chop-house which was his favorite resort when time and opportunity afforded, the Man of Many Faces walked slowly across town.

It was about half-past twelve—for we have given only the results of the detective's reflections—which occupied nearly two hours—and just after passing Sixth avenue on his way eastward, Fox witnessed a strange sight.

Far up the street, fully a hundred yards away, were three men, one of whom pitched forward just as the detective glanced in that direction.

The falling man was caught by one of the others, and then bundled into a carriage standing at the curb.

"A drunk! Lucky for him he was caught before reaching the flag," commented the spectator, but the next instant exclaimed:

"Foul play, by the Eternal!"

CHAPTER XI.

MISS SPENCER AND THE FOX, AND THE PEDDLER.

"Foul play, by the Eternal!"

With the first word, the veteran detective was flying along the sidewalk, at a gait which would not have disgraced a ten-second man under similar circumstances.

It was too late, however. The speed with which the carriage was whirled round, and driven down-town—which caused the declaration of foul play—proved too much for the runner.

When Fox reached Broadway, the carriage was out of sight. So were the policemen of whom he might have made inquiries.

"Well, I've got pretty nearly as many irons in the fire as I can attend to," muttered the detective, "but I'll look out for that team—and I'm pretty sure to know 'em too."

Then the Man of Many Faces went home, and enjoyed the luxury of sleeping in bed for the first time since the night of the Hunter murder.

Next day at noon, happening to be in his office for a few minutes, Mr. Fox was surprised to receive a call from Miss Spencer, who immediately announced:

"We can't find the trunk!"

"Why I wrote you after leaving last night to do nothing for forty-eight hours!" sharply exclaimed Fox, momentarily losing control of himself.

"Oh, yes—I got your letter all right, and I found out who was eavesdropping—" and the fair visitor proceeded to relate in detail how she had discovered Julie, the conversation with Mary, the house-maid, and finally the ill success of the morning search for the trunk.

When she had finished her story, Jessie leaned back in her chair evidently expecting to be commended for acting in direct opposition to orders.

Observing this, the detective—who had been indulging in bad language, under his breath, during the recital of his visitor's story—could not refrain from saying:

"Your shrewdness is truly amazing, Miss Spencer. It is doubtful whether you have left anything further to be done in the matter."

Accepting the compliment in entire good faith, Jessie thanked him, and smiling sweetly took his breath away by adding:

"Oh, I was perfectly sure that you would approve of what we were doing!"

"Well—I'll-be—" gaspingly began Fox,

but stopped short. Words were useless. No language could express his feelings, and for several minutes he remained silently contemplating the ceiling.

At length he asked:

"You would recognize that bundle of papers, I presume, Miss Spencer?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, they are doubtless to be found among your uncle's private papers." Has he any special place—such as a safe, or desk—for things of that kind?"

"Yes; a big, old-fashioned desk in the library—one that he bought as a curiosity."

"Very good! Now, Miss Spencer, those papers belong to you—may be the means of establishing your claim to a large sum, which your uncle is wrongfully withholding from you."

"Look in and around that desk at every opportunity, and if you find the bundle, don't hesitate to take it."

"While your memory is probably all right, it may assist you to know that the name Hunter will appear on the papers, in connection with that of Butler & Spencer."

"Hunter?" echoed Jessie.

"Yes; Benjamin Hunter."

"Why, that is, or was, the name—"

"Precisely. The man who was murdered. He had business dealings with your father, and your uncle."

"Dear me! How strange!" murmured the visitor, and quite irrelevantly asked: "Mr. Fox, do you know a detective of the name of Duncan?"

"Yes," assented the detective looking a little curious.

"Well, a week before Will—that is, Mr. Hunter, disappeared, I met him and he told me that he was going to engage Mr. Duncan to clear him of the cruel suspicion of having murdered his father—as suggested by the newspapers."

"Now, I've tried to find Mr. Duncan, but cannot. Will you please do it, and ask him what has become of Mr. Hunter?"

Before any reply could be made to this appeal, there was a timid knock on the office door, and in response to the detective's invitation a rough, but honest looking man entered.

Being assured that Mr. Fox stood before him, the new-comer extended a dirty, crumpled envelope, upon which was penciled:

"Sept. 8 A. M.

"Whoever presents this envelope unopened before noon, this day, to Farrel Fox, No. 10 — street, N. Y. City, will receive a reward of \$10."

After a hasty glance at the contents of this strangely addressed envelope, Fox asked:

"Where did you get this?"

"Down near Bay Ridge, sir. I'm a peddler, 'n' went to a house there t' see if they wanted anythin', but got chased away by a tough-lookin' woman."

"As I was comin' away that letter fell at my feet, 'n' when I looked t' see where it come from, I saw a chap lookin' through the bars of a window, on the floor above the ground."

"Tell me exactly where it is—or can you go with me?"

"No, sir. I've got my business t' look out for, 'n' I might as well give it up, if I was seen with you, but you can't miss it—" and the messenger described the appearance and situation of the house to which Daring Dave Duncan had been conveyed.

"Do you know anything of the people in that house?" asked Fox.

"No, sir. Never noticed it was occupied till this morning when I saw the chimney smokin'."

"I see. Well, I'm obliged to you for your promptness," and turning to Miss Spencer, while the messenger was still within earshot, the speaker in quite a loud voice continued:

"That letter was from the very gentleman

you were inquiring about. I'll go see him to-night, and let you know in the morning."

Then as the door closed on the messenger, the veteran detective snatched the hat which he had laid aside while talking to Miss Spencer, and jumped up exclaiming:

"Hurry up, Miss Spencer! I must be after that fellow like a shot," and pushing the astonished girl ahead locked the door.

"Don't forget what I've told you, and for heaven's sake keep it to yourself!"

CHAPTER XII.

AN INNOCENT THIEF.

LEAVING the bewildered girl staring at and after him, as if she thought he had suddenly gone mad, the Man of Many Faces rushed down-stairs at the same marvelous speed he had displayed the previous night.

This time, however, the chase was successful, for on reaching the doorway the detective saw his late visitor going toward Broadway, but only about twenty yards distant.

"It's a 'plant' as sure as fate: but he overdid the thing—described everything too clearly for a man driven away by an angry woman, on his first visit to a house."

Thus meditated Fox as he started in pursuit of the Brooklyn peddler.

Broadway was but fifty yards distant. On the corner stood one of the stalwart squad, on reaching whom the detective said:

"Jim, I'm going to lose my watch in less than a minute! Keep your eyes open!"

The big policeman grinned as he nodded understandingly, but the speaker was off as he uttered the last word—the messenger being only a few yards ahead, and moving slowly.

Although not familiar with Duncan's handwriting, Fox was quite satisfied that the former was then, or had been very recently, in great danger, and had written for assistance, because no one knew that they were even acquainted.

But was that the letter as originally written? and was the house referred to the real place of Duncan's confinement?

The letter purporting to come from Duncan was an appeal for assistance, and read as follows:

"I have been trapped, and am threatened with death at any moment, in an old house situated about a hundred yards off the road, half-way between Brooklyn and Bay Ridge.

"The Hunter business is, I feel sure, at the bottom of the affair.

"There are two men—(Nick and Dick), and a woman—(Poll)—in charge here, and another prisoner besides myself.

"DUNCAN."

"P. S. You may possibly be too late. If so, look in mattresses of all rooms on second story—can't give exact location of mine—and you will find mems. of what I know and suspect about the Hunter case."

Genuine or not this letter demanded immediate attention.

Fox's language indicated that he was suspicious of a trap.

Under ordinary circumstances, the veteran would have shadowed the messenger, but there was no time for that now—a man's life might be at stake.

Rushing across the street after leaving the policeman, the detective hurried to the corner below, where he re-crossed, and advanced to meet the messenger.

Short as the interval since leaving the policeman had been, Fox's wonderful talent had been brought into play, and the removal of his shaggy white beard—done while crossing the street—more than counterbalancing the wearing of the same clothes, he was now an entirely different looking man.

Little dreaming of what was in store for him, the messenger was slowly walking along, staring into the shop windows every

now and then, when he suddenly ran plump into a respectable looking old gentleman going in the opposite direction.

The latter promptly grasped the Brooklynite and demanded the return of his watch.

"I ain't got yer watch!" was the indignant response.

"Come, come, sir! Hand over my watch, or I'll hand you over to the police!" threatened the old gentleman.

It requires but very little time, and hardly any cause, to collect a very large crowd on Broadway, and in less than half a minute the respectable looking old gentleman and his captive were surrounded by an immense throng.

Before the accused could respond to the second demand for the watch, two policemen pushed through the crowd, and inquired what was the matter.

"This fellow has got my watch," explained the old gentleman, at the same time pointing to a chain hanging from a button-hole of his vest.

"I ain't got yer watch! Ain't got any watch at all!" angrily exclaimed the accused.

"Better search him at once or he'll be passing it to a confederate," suggested the old gentleman—"if he hasn't already done so."

"Jim"—one of the policemen—looked curiously at the speaker, but adopted the suggestion—and found the watch in the man's vest pocket!

A surprised oath escaped the prisoner's lips on seeing the watch.

Recovering from the genuine surprise which the finding of the watch had caused him to exhibit, the man who had declared himself a Brooklyn peddler began to protest his innocence, but was interrupted by being suddenly handcuffed to one of the big policemen, while the other grasped him by the left arm which was free.

"You needn't 'cuff' me," remonstrated the prisoner, "I'll go without your doing that."

"That's all right!" laughingly returned Jim. "That's all right, Jack, but we've heard of your little tricks, and would rather be sure now that we've got you."

"What d'ye mean? My name isn't Jack!"

"Oh, no—certainly not! Never heard of Honest Jack Hart, of course," was the ironical reply, as, at a nod from Jim, both officers started with their prisoner for the station—the affair of the watch being entirely overlooked by everybody when the name of a badly "wanted" notorious Western burglar, and suspected murderer, was mentioned by the officer.

"Honest Jack Hart!" muttered Fox, as the crowd dispersed. "Then it is a trap! I'll have to be careful."

At the same moment a well-dressed, shrewd-looking man who had arrived on the scene just in time to witness the departure of the officers and their prisoner, was saying to himself:

"Well, that was a mighty queer caper of Jack's!

"But I must watch that old guy, for if we can manage to bluff the other charge it won't do to have this affair coming up."

Having decided that unusual care would have to be exercised in visiting the house near Bay Ridge, Fox hurried back to his office to assume another and more elaborate disguise.

The stranger who had expressed his intention of watching the "old guy," followed the detective—at a safe distance until the latter entered the building where his office was located, and then quite close until the office itself was entered.

"Farrel Fox!" exclaimed the shadowing stranger, reading the sign as he passed by the door.

"Great Scott! It's the very man Jack was sent to decoy."

The speaker was fully as shrewd as his face indicated, and after a few minutes' hesi-

tation, walked to the end of the corridor furthest from Fox's office.

In about ten minutes, the detective reappeared looking fully thirty years younger—that is to say, about thirty years of age—but by no means as respectable.

Glancing around to see if he was observed as he locked the door, Fox saw a man walking up and down, and quickly passed out of the building.

But for the locking of the office door, the stranger would not have believed such a change possible. That act, however, was sufficient to prove the detective's identity, and the other followed him, muttering:

"Now, it'll be a race to the house, and I've got to look sharp or he'll beat me!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DUNCAN'S DISCOVERY.

WE will precede the detective—now truly Farrel the Fox—to the house on the road to Bay Ridge, resuming the story there at the point where the ruffian, Nick, declared his intention of "finishing" Daring Dave Duncan.

Again, the latter was about to spring up and make a fight for his life, when the door was thrown open, and the woman entered.

The turning of the knob had caused the other murderous ruffian to delay placing Duncan's head in the desired position, and when Poll entered she saw Nick with the deadly sandbag raised, impatiently awaiting his confederate's attention.

"Hullo! What's up?" she exclaimed.

Dick pointed significantly to the handcuffs and revolver.

Advancing to the table, Poll looked attentively at the articles, then demanded:

"Well, suppose he is?"

"There's no suppose about it!" retorted Nick. "He's one o' them bloodhounds, but he'll never run down another man."

"He's a bloodhound, is he?" echoed Poll.

"Well, so much the better. Ten't one the other fellow don't know it, an' he'll give up twice—yes, four times as much t' get him out o' the way, when he does know it!"

"Poll's right!" exclaimed Dick.

"Ye kin just gamble on that!" affirmed the woman, adding:

"Instead o' knockin' what life there's left out o' him—as ye were goin' t'—ye ought t' be tryin' t' bring him round a bit, for the better he is the more ye'll get."

"We did give him some whisky," observed Dick, "but it hadn't no effect."

"Try again," was the laconic rejoinder.

The ruffians obeyed, and again a small quantity of the fiery fluid was forced down the detective's throat.

"That'll do. If he's goin' t' recover at all, that'll bring him round after a bit," declared the woman.

"Ye might as well come down for a while," she continued, and glancing at the money and jewelry on the table, asked:

"How much is that worth?"

"About a hundred and a half," promptly lied Dick, foreseeing what was coming.

"I believe ye'r lying," calmly declared Poll, "but that don't make any difference. Question is, what are ye goin' t' do—divide 'mong us three, or 'mong the hull gang?"

The men looked somewhat confused, and a little angry too, noting which the woman continued:

"Oh, I see! It was goin' to be a quiet little divvy between yourselves, eh?"

"Well, it'll have to be three, or all, now. Which way'll ye have it?"

"It wouldn't buy more'n cigars 'n' drinks if it goes round, so I s'pose we'd better call it 'three,' answered Dick, looking inquiringly at his confederate.

The latter nodded sullen assent, and sweeping the booty into her apron the woman directed the others to follow her, adding:

"Better do it now, or you'll have all hands in it."

The threat was sufficient, and the ruffians promptly followed her, locking the door, but forgetting in their eagerness the question of leaving the prisoner at liberty to move about.

Duncan listened until satisfied that there was no immediate danger of their returning, then jumping up looked at the window, and sounded the walls.

"Window's barred, and this wall is solid," soliloquized the detective as he examined his surroundings. "The other prisoner must be in the room on this side."

He was crossing the floor to the other side of the room while speaking, and had just reached the wall, when the rattling of a chain accompanied by a faint moaning sound, fell upon his ear.

The noises came from the adjoining room—that of the other prisoner, of course—and as the detective applied his ear to the wall, there was a startling increase in the sounds.

Inured, as he was to all sorts of sights and sounds of human misery, Duncan could not repress a shudder as he listened to the pitiful moaning of the prisoner and pictured the scene on the other side of the wall.

Suddenly the moaning changed to horrible cries and curses, the loud rattling of the chain telling how the unfortunate prisoner was tugging at it, and then as suddenly came the sound of a heavy fall—and, then silence.

"Horrible, horrible!" muttered the listener. "The fiends will kill or craze that poor fellow in short order—if they haven't done the last already."

Returning to the window, Duncan gazed out at the lonely roadway, tried the solidity of the bars, and then threw himself upon the bed to think over the situation.

He was not at all put out at finding the window barred, for, even if it was not, the detective had no idea of attempting to escape.

Lying on his back with his hands clasped under his head, Duncan had been buried in thought about a quarter of an hour, when suddenly the door was thrown open, and two men entered the room.

There had not been the slightest noise—nothing to warn the prisoner of the proximity of the new-comers until they opened the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN OMINOUS VISITOR.

PLAINLY the intention was to surprise the prisoner, and the latter had no desire to conceal from them that they had accomplished their purpose. On the contrary, he exhibited just a trifle more surprise than he really felt.

Both men wore black masks, neat clothing and rubber-soled shoes, the last accounting for their noiseless approach.

"Well, sir, how do you feel this morning?" asked one, approaching the bed.

"Bad—my head aches terribly," answered Duncan, and still preserving the appearance of surprise and bewilderment, asked:

"But how did I get here? What has happened me?"

"Your head is injured, I understand, and a friend of yours brought you here in his carriage. He will tell you all about it by and by," answered the man who had addressed Duncan.

The speaker was evidently of a very different class to the ruffians who had preceded him, and his visit seemed to be the result of curiosity, for after a long, searching look he turned away, saying:

"Your friend will be here about noon. If you need anything at any time, rap on the door. I'll send up a stick to you."

Duncan could hardly detect the turning of the key, as the door was locked after the departure of the masked man, so gently was it done.

This carefulness seemed to amuse him, and laughing softly he muttered:

"So, there's been an argument below. He was sent up to identify me—and failed. I wonder who he is?"

Subsequently events proved that Duncan was correct. There had been quite an argument over him, and it was renewed with increased interest when the man sent to see if he could identify the prisoner reported in the negative.

"And I'm willing to gamble that, if he is a detective, he doesn't do business West of the Rockies!" exclaimed the companion of the man who had done the talking with Duncan.

The latter was the most expert counterfeiter this, or any other, country has ever produced—Charles Frederick Ulrich—a man with whom the U. S. Government has gone to the extent of making terms, in order to insure the destruction of certain plates.

Ulrich was then engaged on a big job. The house had been engaged by him for that purpose, and he did not relish the idea of having it used for anything else—least of all, anything liable to attract the attention of the police.

"You should not have had anything to do with such work!" he declared to Duncan's assailants, adding:

"I don't care what you have got, or are to get. We are not here for that kind of business, and you must drop it."

"I am going to New York, and when I return to-morrow, shall expect to find this house free of every person and thing not related to the purpose for which it was engaged."

"He's got his Irish up, and you've got to knuckle," commented Ulrich's companion as the "boss" counterfeiter (having issued his fiat) left the room.

Both Dick and Nick scowled at this, and the speaker sharply continued:

"You fellows begged your way into this thing, and you'll do just what Charley orders—d'ye understand? We're not going to allow you to ruin us by getting him riled—not, by the Eternal, if we had to pitch you and your people into the bay!"

"You've got twenty-four hours. Make the most of it!"

"Hello! Here comes somebody, and look-in' for you, I'll bet!" interposed Poll at this point, and secretly glad of the interruption, Dick (to whom the words were addressed), jumped from his seat, and went to the doorway.

A few words passed between the new-comer and Dick, after which both passed upstairs to the room where Duncan was confined.

Without any preliminary the stranger (who was in disguise on his arrival, and who now wore a mask borrowed from Dick), advanced to where the detective was lying, and demanded:

"What was your object in stealing that beard, in Considine's, last night?"

The detective simply stared at the speaker by way of reply—his astonishment at the openness of the question helping to give a natural appearance to the bewildered look he assumed.

"Come, come! There's no use trying to fool me!" continued the stranger, and turning to Dick, ordered:

"You and the other man must see to it as you see fit; but, between you, you must manage not to leave this man alone again until there is an answer to the question you have just heard me ask."

"If there's no answer by noon, then use him as you did the other fellow," and the speaker nodded toward the room adjoining.

The stranger paused to note the effect of his words, but he might as well have looked at the wall.

"Look out that you don't carry that game too far!" he went on. "You have a chance

to explain now; but if you don't do it before noon, then you never will—you'll never have the opportunity! D'ye understand?"

The prisoner made no response. He was staring at the ceiling, and apparently did not even hear the ominous words of the stranger.

Angry at being baffled, and not so certain as he pretended to be that the prisoner was really sensible of what was being said, the stranger, after a few moments' hesitation, quitted the room, followed by Dick.

"Don't do anything until I—until Mr. G— arrives. He'll be here about two this afternoon, and this fellow may take a notion to talk by that time. Better tie him up again as soon as you've had breakfast."

These instructions were given by the stranger as his confederate unlocked the door, but the detective caught only enough to warn him that something was to happen him after the ruffian Dick had breakfasted—something evil, of course.

"Wish I knew what it was," muttered Duncan, as the footfalls of his visitors died away.

After a few minutes he got up and examined what had been thrown aside as worthless, when Poll was carrying away his money and jewelry.

"Ah! As I expected," he murmured, and picking up an old leather pocketbook, examined its contents—just as Poll had before discarding it, because of its ungainly size and worn appearance.

A few envelopes, and a half dozen sheets of paper was all there was in the pocketbook, but with a lead-pencil they were just then worth more than thousand-dollar bank-notes.

Sitting down on the bed, ready to stretch out at full length at a moment's notice, Duncan wrote a letter to Farrel Fox, and inclosed it in an envelope.

Placing the letter in his pocket, the detective began writing again, covering four sheets of paper before ceasing. These he folded and placed in another envelope (also directed to Fox), and tearing open the ticking of his mattress with his teeth, placed the second letter among the straw.

"Now, to find a messenger!" he exclaimed, and going to the window looked out.

Situated so far from the road, and almost hidden by trees, it seemed impossible that anybody—except those connected with the den—would pass close enough to attract their attention, but just as Duncan reached the window, a wagon stopped in front of the house.

"A peddler!" exclaimed the detective, reading the sign on the wagon, and noting the barrel and baskets it contained.

"Now, I'm all right!" he continued—thinking not of himself, but his case. "Ten dollars will be more than this man would make in two days, though I'd treble it, only he might think the service too important."

The entrance to the house did not face the road, and the peddler who was approaching would have to pass under Duncan's window, as the latter surmised. As the man drew near, the detective thrust his arm through the bars, at the same time cautiously calling:

"Hello! Hello! Look at this!"

The man looked up, as Duncan with the last word threw the letter to him. It was picked up, and eagerly examined, and then with a significant nod, the peddler entered the house.

"Now, if I had my revolver, I'd laugh at them!" Exultantly exclaimed Duncan, little dreaming that the peddler's wagon was used to convey the results of Ulrich's skill to the various Express offices; that the barrel and baskets were only a blind, and that the pretended peddler was one of the gang!

Half an hour later, Duncan heard footsteps approaching, and threw himself on the bed.

"Now, we'll see what it is," he muttered, adding,

"Wish that fellow had sent the cane."

In a few moments, the door was thrown open, and the ruffians Nick and Dick entered—Duncan keeping his eyes fixed on the ceiling, pretending not to have noticed their entrance.

The men approached the bed in a careless way, but when within reaching distance both sprung upon the prisoner, who, taken completely by surprise, was quickly bound and gagged.

"The fixing of the time as noon, was merely a blind to throw me off my guard. They have come to 'finish' me!" the thought that flashed through Duncan's mind.

He was quickly undeceived as to the reason for the sudden change from comparative liberty to bondage by the ruffian Nick, who mockingly inquired:

"Ain't got any more letters t' send t' New York, have ye, Mister Duncan?"

Although the latter partly guessed the truth, and knew further deception as to his physical and mental condition was impossible, he made no response, causing his questioner to hiss:

"Curse you, you'll talk plenty by'n'by! Ay, you'll beg for a chance t' talk—t' pray—but you'll not get it!"

"Never mind that, now!" interrupted Dick. "We must get t'other one out o' the way first—let's go for him."

Reluctantly, as if scarcely able to restrain himself from "finishing" the prisoner at once, Nick followed his confederate into the adjoining room, from which quickly issued most appalling cries, mingled with the sounds of blows and threats, and curses.

CHAPTER XV.

REMOVED TO NEW QUARTERS.

For a minute or two after the cries in the adjoining room ceased, there was a dead silence. Then came the rattle of the chain, and the noise of a hammer and a chisel.

"Removing the poor fellow's irons," commented the detective, and then came the thought:

"When they are through with him, my turn will come."

After a few minutes he heard the chain fall on the bare floor, the muffled sounds of men talking and moving about, and the footsteps of the two murderous ruffians as they passed out of the room, through the hall, and down the stairs.

Minute after minute passed until an hour had elapsed, and still the expected visitors did not put in an appearance, nor was there any indication of life about the house.

The silence puzzled the detective. During the early morning he could hear all kinds of noises below, and occasionally catch the sound of a voice. Now, all was still as death.

As may be imagined, Duncan had not been idle while awaiting the return of the ruffians, who it was an even chance would come back only to murder him, but his efforts to free himself were as vain as they were exhausting, and by the time the second hour had elapsed he was compelled to desist.

"Strange that they don't return," he muttered, sinking back on the bed, and five minutes later was sound asleep!

Shortly after the exhausted detective had fallen asleep, a carriage swung out of the road, and, notwithstanding the dangers and difficulties incurred, was driven to within a short distance of the house where finding further progress impossible, three men jumped out, and a minute later entered the room where lay the sleeping detective.

It needed but one glance to satisfy the new-comers that the sleep was genuine, and one remarking "it makes it all the easier," took a box from his pocket, and from the

box a damp sponge, which he applied to the sleeper's nostrils.

"Now, hustle him into the carriage," directed the man with the sponge as he restored that article to the box, adding:

"Better look sharp for the other fellow. He isn't called the Fox for nothing."

"He'll never know what happened him!" grimly assured Nick.

"Not on this side o' the Jordan!" added Dick, as he grasped Duncan by the shoulders, while his confederate picked up the legs, and thus they carried the prisoner to the carriage.

"You'll have t' keep your eyes peeled, boys, or you'll be dumped, for 'the Fox' is a terror, now I'm tellin' ye," again warned the third ruffian, as he took his place in the carriage, which was immediately driven away toward the city.

A scornful laugh greeted the warning, and as they re-entered the house Dick remarked:

"He can't get here before one or two, an' it ain't more'n eleven yet, so we may as well take it easy."

The two worthies had the house to themselves, all the others having departed, and everything relating to the counterfeiting business having been secreted, shortly after Ulrich left for New York.

This was the result of a consultation among the gang—the intercepted letter having created no small alarm.

"We'd better shut up shop entirely for a day or two," said one of the counterfeiters. "This fellow appears to have been perfectly sensible all the time, and it's possible that this isn't the only letter he wrote."

"You're right," agreed another, expressing the general feeling. "You're right, and we had better be prepared for a visit from the nearest police station."

An hour later, the counterfeiters having removed, or concealed, all traces of their presence, took a twenty-four hours' vacation, leaving Nick and Dick in charge of the house—these worthies expressing their willingness to risk a visit from the police.

The counterfeiters lived well, and there was no lack of good wines and liquors in the cellar.

Having full sway now, the guardians of the den proceeded to show their trustworthiness by sampling the various brands of wine and liquor, with the result that both were in a drunken stupor long before the time fixed for the arrival of "Mr. G—."

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. FULLER FROM "RUFFLE CRICK."

At 1:45 P. M., Messrs. Dick Norton and Nick Diamond, the guardians of the counterfeiters' den, were aroused in no gentle manner by the shrewd-looking man who had started from New York to give warning of the arrest of "Honest John Hart," and of the coming of Farrel the Fox.

The "guardians" were seated opposite each other at the dinner-table, upon which rested their heads. Between them was a half-emptied bottle of whisky. Choice cigars, too, were scattered over the table and floor.

With an angry oath the new-comer picked up a bucket of water, and dashed an even half of it into the face of each man—as near as he could get at it.

Both men recovered their senses almost instantly, and both in an equally angry mood.

"What the—" began Nick, rushing toward the new-comer, but was interrupted by:

"Shut up, you drunken fool!"

The order was emphasized by the revolver which was leveled with lightning-like rapidity, and the ruffian came to a sudden halt, but Dick—the colder-blooded of the two—had been thoroughly aroused, and drawing his pistol leveled at the new-comer.

The latter was the apex of a triangle

which the three men formed, and did not realize his danger until Norton jeeringly exclaimed:

"Fire away, Carpenter! But don't forget that when you pull, so will I!"

"Reckon I'll have t' take a hand in this leetle game myself, pardner—just t' sort o' even up things. So, when you pull, I'll follow suit—Stand still!"

The three confederates, forgetting their quarrel for the moment, turned toward the doorway on hearing these words—the order to "stand still" being delivered in a tone that fairly lifted Dick from the floor.

A moment before Carpenter was at the mercy of Norton. Now, through the timely intervention of the stranger standing in the doorway, the situation was practically reversed for Diamond carried no pistol.

"Guess you'd better drop that gun, mister," continued the man in the doorway, "it might go off, ye know—Drop it, I say!"

Like the order to "stand still," the last words came like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, the cool, easy tone of the speech preceding them giving no warning of the terrible energy with which those that followed were hurled forth.

As much cowed by the stranger's manner as his pistol, Norton obeyed the last order by placing his "gun" on the table, and was then politely requested to:

"Get back t' the other end o' the shebang, blast ye!"

"Now, pardner, what d'ye want t' do wud 'em?" asked the stranger, as he stepped forward and picked up Dick's revolver.

"Oh, I guess it's all right as it is," replied Carpenter, after a few moments' hesitation, and smilingly added, "It was a kind of a family fight."

"Ex-cuse me, then, for stickin' my oar in, but that cuss looked as if he meant business."

Carpenter glanced curiously at the rough-looking speaker, who, from his style and general make-up seemed more at home in a Western mining-camp than the peaceful suburbs of Brooklyn.

Still, the stranger had done Carpenter no small service, and the latter was not slow to acknowledge it, saying:

"There's no mistake about that part of it you may be sure—he did mean business. Ten to one I'd have been well on the road to Kingdom Come but for you. What shall I call you?"

The stranger looked sharply—suspiciously—at the counterfeiter before replying:

"I reckon you ain't dirty enough t' hurt a man that pulled ye out of a hole, so I'll tell ye."

"Folks at Ruffle Crick used t' call me Fuller—Handsome Hank—'cause I'm so durned ugly, ye know. But ther' wuz a stage stopped near Ruffle Crick, 'n'—well, it got sort o' unhealthy in that neighborhood, so as I had a leetle dust I thought I'd travel around for a while."

Carpenter smiled at this explanation—but warmly declared:

"Mr. Fuller, you've done me a great service by your timely interference, for those scoundrels hate me, and though I could have managed one the other would have managed me."

"Well, I'm glad t' hear it's all right, but why'n thunder don't ye fire 'em out—get rid of 'em?" asked the Westerner.

Why indeed? Here was a man worth the pair of them—and one who would be satisfied with doing the work prescribed by the gang, and not endanger the success of the "job," as well as the safety of all, by doing outside work.

The counterfeiters had nothing to do with the Hunter murder—"didn't care two straws about it," as one of them expressed it, yet through the unauthorized conduct of Diamond and Norton they had been forced into the affair.

"I'll risk it—at all events keep him until the boys have passed on it," thought Carpenter, and motioning Fuller to follow, walked outside.

"I don't want those skunks to hear what I'm saying," he began, as they walked toward the road, and then as if suddenly reminded of something exclaimed:

"By Jove, I forgot to warn them!"

"Come back to the house, Mr. Fuller."

The Westerner nodded, and when they reached the house stood at the door, while Carpenter entered.

Completely sobered by their recent experience, and somewhat fearful of the result of their attack on the man who stood next to Ulrich in the gang of which they were the humblest members—mere watchmen—the counterfeiter found Diamond and Norton sullen—suspicious, but servile.

"You are a precious pair of skunks!" scornfully exclaimed Carpenter on entering. "I rushed down from New York to warn you that Honest Jack had over-reached himself in some way, and had been arrested at the request of the Fox, who must be unacquainted with this locality or he would be here by this time. What have you done with those two men? No lying, now!"

"Moved 'em down the road 'bout half a mile—red house near the shore," answered Dick.

"Too near—but that's your lookout," remarked Carpenter.

"Couldn't get no place else in a hurry," replied Dick.

"Well, it's none of our funeral at any rate, but you are to meet somebody here today?"

"Yes—ought t' be here now."

"Then, let it be the last appointment at this house, and when he comes take him off to where the prisoners are confined," directed Carpenter, and, then, as another idea occurred to him, continued:

"Or, better still, you go there now. I've seen your man and will send him after you. This Fox is liable to drop in with a squad of policemen at any minute."

"Getting very careful about us," looked Nick.

Carpenter understood and explained:

"Oh, as far as you are personally concerned, I wouldn't lift a finger to save you from hanging, but you are the only people mentioned in that letter, and the chances are that the Fox knows both of you, so if he found you here it might cast suspicion on the house."

This sounded reasonable, and was all the more forcible because of the bitterly scornful tone of the speaker.

The men exchanged glances, and each read assent in the eyes of the other, for neither cared to meet Farrel the Fox under the circumstances suggested by Carpenter.

"Well, I guess ye'r' right—we'd better slope," agreed Norton, slowly arising from his seat, and, then, after glancing at the clock, gave minute directions for the guidance of his employer—to all of which the man outside paid strict attention.

For a few minutes after the departure of the two ruffians, the counterfeiter sat thinking deeply, and, then, as if coming to a sudden determination, jumped up calling:

"Come in, Fuller!"

The Westerner lounged into the room, and the other asked:

"You're not doing anything, I suppose?"

"No."

"Well, if you'd like to take the chances, I think I can put you in the way of doing something big, but it's not certain until I've seen some other people."

"Good enough! If ye think I kin do it, count me in. Dust is runnin' low 'n' ther' ain't no stage t' hold up round these diggins."

"No, I'm afraid stages of your kind are

rather too scarce to be profitable," laughingly returned Carpenter, adding:

"But, never mind that—I guess you can do as well with us, and at less risk."

"Now, first, did you hear what that fellow said about directing a man to a house about a half mile from here, near the shore?"

"Yes, blame him, I did."

"Well— See here, Fuller! I'm going to take chances on you, (though it's 'way out o' my style to do it,) but you look square—and I want a lift."

"Let 'er rip, pardner! If I can do anythin', spit it out."

"Good! The game I'm interested in is one which makes my meeting the police here undesirable—even if I disguise myself. Still it's necessary that somebody should be here to direct the man who is coming to meet those two scoundrels—one who can risk meeting the police. Can you?"

"Reckon I kin. They wouldn't know me from Adam's brother."

"All right! Then you stay until this man arrives—unless the police force you to quit. They can't do anything, however, for the house is clear of everything suspicious. Say you're taking care of it for Mr. Frederick [Ulrich] and the agent will support you if necessary. I'll be back after dark."

Carpenter left almost immediately, fearing to meet the police in the expected raid.

Five minutes later a carriage came tearing along the road from Brooklyn, and the Westerner muttered:

"Here's my mutton!"

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. FULLER HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.

THE carriage referred to was a light buggy drawn by a magnificent horse which evidently had not been spared in the drive to Brooklyn.

As the Westerner appeared to expect, this carriage stopped opposite the house. The driver jumped out and came rapidly toward the house—Fuller examining him sharply as he advanced.

"Where's Norton?" demanded the stranger, halting before the Westerner who stood in the doorway.

"Are you the man who was to be here some time ago?" counter-questioned Fuller.

"Yes, yes—I'm a little late," impatiently admitted the other.

"Reckon you're the right man, then. Come inside."

The stranger followed the Westerner into the house, and the latter continued:

"There's been somethin' of a change here 'n' your folks are gone t' safer quarters. If you'll jest look out for things down here for a leetle while I'll go 'long 'n' show ye where they've gone to."

The stranger nodded assent, and Fuller left him—ascending to the floor above, where he began examining the mattresses in the different rooms!

After ten minutes' absence the Westerner returned to the impatiently waiting man below, and expressed himself as ready to start.

"It is time!" muttered the other—in French.

"What'd ye say?"

"Nothing—come!" and the stranger led the way to the buggy.

"Let me drive—I've got t' pick the road as well as the place," said Fuller as they stepped into the buggy, and without waiting for permission picked up the reins.

The stranger muttered something, but his guide apparently did not hear it, and started the horse down the road.

Not a word was exchanged during the ten minutes' drive which followed, but when the buggy was stopped at the house described by Norton, the stranger said:

"You need not come in."

"That's where ye jump the track, stranger," returned Fuller, "I do need to come in."

"Why?" sharply demanded the other.

"Orders," was the laconic answer.

"Confound your— But, come! I've no time to waste"—and the stranger led the way to the door, where he rapped for admission.

"Hello! What the deuce are you doing here?" exclaimed Dick—who responded to the stranger's summons—on seeing Fuller.

"Orders," answered the latter, repeating his laconic explanation to the stranger.

Norton looked somewhat suspicious, but, as before intimated neither he nor Diamond were of any account among the counterfeits, and, therefore, he was unaware of the fact that Fuller was not yet even a member of the gang. On the contrary, looking upon the stranger as one of the principal men in the Western part of the gang, Norton asked:

"Any orders for me or Nick?"

"Yes. I'll give 'em t' ye soon as this party is through here," and with a careless—almost contemptuous—nod toward the stranger, Fuller pushed by Dick and entered the house.

"Who is that fellow? What does he mean?" furiously demanded the stranger—the employer of Norton and Diamond.

"A good deal bigger man than he looks," confidently answered the tool, and as the recent scene in the other house came before him, added:

"And he's an ugly customer, too, Mr. Gilon. Don't meddle with him—he's dangerous!"

Mr. Gilon shook his head impatiently at the warning, like a spirited horse chafing at being restrained.

"Well, well," he began, then stopped short, and abruptly demanded:

"Has that man said anything?"

"Nary a word."

With a muttered curse, "Mr. Gilon" began pacing the floor, but after a few minutes stopped before Norton and asked:

"Is there any way to make him talk? To make him tell who and what he is, and what he's after?"

Then, for the first time, Dick recollected the postscript to Duncan's letter. The transferring of the prisoners, and the subsequent drunk, had caused him to forget it until that moment. The counterfeiters, he knew, would not trouble themselves looking for the memorandum mentioned by Duncan in the intercepted letter to Fox. They had no interest in the affair.

"It's there yet, and it's just what he (Gilon) wants," thought Norton, and aloud:

"See here, Mr. Gilon! What is it worth t' find out who he is, 'n' what he's after?"

"Oh—anything you like! Say five hundred dollars."

"If you'll wait here half an hour, I'll guarantee t' be able t' find out what ye want t' know."

Gilon stared at the speaker but the latter was not prepared for an explanation, and asked:

"Will ye wait?"

"Certainly! But aren't you mistaken?"

"Don't think so. You'll find Nick upstairs takin' care of 'em,"—and laughing like a fiend, the ruffian departed.

Mr. Gilon stood staring after his tool until the latter disappeared from view, and, then, remembering the reference to Nick, started up-stairs.

On reaching the head of the stairs, Mr. Gilon was a little startled to find himself confronted by Fuller.

"Come in here—I've got something to say to you," declared the latter.

Wonderingly, Gilon followed the speaker into an adjoining room.

"Sit down, for I've got a lot to tell you," asserted Fuller; and when the astonished listener had seated himself, began:

"You are anxious to find out who and what this man, Duncan, is?"

Gilon nodded, and the other calmly continued:

"Well, I can tell you all about him. First, he's a private detective, looking for some of the rewards offered in the Hunter affair, incidentally, but employed to hunt down the murderer or murderers.

"Just where you come in I am not yet certain."

"Eh? What d'ye mean?" exclaimed Gilon, starting up from his seat.

"Sit down, sit down," quietly directed Fuller, and as the other sunk back pale and trembling, continued:

"After you saw him this morning, this private detective—Duncan is his name—wrote a letter—"

"Who says I saw him?" interrupted Gilon.

"If you don't keep quiet, I'll shut up," threatened Fuller. "What difference does it make whether you are wearing a full black beard, or auburn whiskers?"

Gilon made no reply—seemed unable to—and Fuller went on:

"As I was saying, this Duncan wrote a letter to a man named Fox—another detective—asking for assistance, and saying that if Fox came too late to save him, a full account (?) of what this Duncan knew of the Hunter murder would be found concealed in his mattress."

"Good heavens!" gasped Gilon.

"Yes, it does look pretty cloudy for you," assentingly observed Fuller, and looking sharply at his companion went on:

"This Dick has gone back to look for that memo. in the mattress, but won't find it—he's too late entirely."

"Why? How do you know?" asked Gilon.

"Because it's in my pocket."

"You needn't worry about it, I'll let you see it before you leave here," he continued, and walking toward the adjoining room, called:

"Come in here, Dave! Bring the other fellow with you."

"You see," explained Fuller, turning to his amazed companion, "Duncan can make things clearer than I can—even with the statement he left for me—so it'll be better to talk to him. Don't ye think so?"

Gilon made no reply—seemed incapable of doing so, and Fuller watched him sharply while from the adjoining room entered Nick Diamond and Dave Duncan—the former handcuffed, and the latter free!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FOX AND THE FRENCHMAN.

GILON stared in a dazed way at the late prisoner and his companion, apparently unable to comprehend what the reader has doubtless already surmised—that Fuller and Farrel, the Fox, were one.

Shadowing a man whose business it is to shadow others, is very delicate work at any time, but when that man is of the caliber of Farrel, the Fox, it is impossible—for any length of time—and before reaching the ferry the detective was aware of the fact that he was being shadowed by the shrewd-looking man—Carpenter.

The latter meant to drop the detective on the Brooklyn side of the ferry, but the Fox was not to be dropped.

When leaving his office the latter looked a wreck—the bleary eyed, dissipated remains of a young bummer. On the ferry-boat he lost Carpenter, but the shadow paid little heed, having followed him on board.

On arriving in Brooklyn, Carpenter stopped for a very few minutes to remonstrate against the exorbitant amount which a hackman proposed to charge for driving him to Bay Ridge.

While the counterfeiter was thus engaged a sharp, tough-looking man pointed to the seat of the carriage, held up a dollar to the driver, nodded at Carpenter, and slapped his trousers-pocket significantly.

In the language of the day, the driver "caught on," and as he did Carpenter said:

"It's dead robbery, but if you'll keep those horses on the jump all the way, I'll give up ten dollars."

"I'll send 'em along for all they're worth," assured the hackman. "Jump in!"

He nodded to the tough-looking individual at the same time, and while Carpenter was getting into the carriage the other slipped up on the box.

The same maneuver was gone through on arriving at the counterfeiter's den—the driver engaging Carpenter's attention, while his other passenger slipped down on the other side of the carriage.

Thus it happened that the Westerner—Farrel the Fox—was on hand when the two ruffians attacked the counterfeiter, and although he had only changed a battered derby for a broad-brimmed slouch hat, the latter failed to recognize in his rescuer the man whom he had been shadowing an hour previous.

And, now, to return to our story.

Unable apparently to comprehend the change in the situation of the late prisoner and his ferocious guardian, Mr. Gilon looked appealingly at the Fox.

"Yes," responded the latter, "that's the way it is. If there's anything you'd like to have explained, I guess Duncan won't mind telling you for he's a good-natured fellow—though he was choking your man to death when I came up-stairs."

"And speaking of choking, I don't suppose you remember me, but you do, of course, the case of poor Marie Lazard?"

While asking this question, the Fox was passing his hand over his face. When he removed it his face no longer bore the stamp of the Western "bad" man. Instead, he looked a bright-eyed, volatile Frenchman.

With a cry of terror, Gilon sprung to his feet, exclaiming:

"In God's name who are you? What do you mean?"

"I am, or rather was, Crapaud. You know who Marie Lazard was."

"And, now, Mr. Cartier," continued the Man of Many Faces, resuming his official tone and expression of countenance, "we have another murder mystery to solve, but I don't think there will be much mystery left after you've told your story—and that you will do in preference to going back to Paris, I'm quite sure, eh?"

Cartier—for "Mr. Gilon" was the mysterious Frenchman in disguise—shuddered as he bowed assent to the Fox's proposition, and the latter looked significantly at Duncan, who responded by asking:

"What have you done with that beard?"

The Frenchman's reply was a gesture toward his breast pocket, and having secured the beard, Duncan continued:

"Now, why were you so anxious to obtain this?"

Although amazed by the change in the situation at first, Cartier had been gradually recovering himself, and though pale and nervous, there was a dangerous gleam in his eye.

"He has formed a plan—is nerving himself for something desperate," thought the lynx-eyed Fox. "I'll see if the Lazard affair won't take the starch out of him."

It did most completely, and until Duncan asked the cause of his anxiety to obtain the beard, Cartier seemed to have lost the power of speech. Now, however, he started up as if suddenly awakened, and in a voice hoarse with fear, revenge and desperation, asked:

"If I tell you all, will you be silent regarding the Lazard murder?"

"Yes, that is out of my hands. Your

countrymen may do their own tracking—if you act square."

"I will, I will! I'll tell you all!" eagerly exclaimed Cartier.

CHAPTER XIX.

CARTIER'S STORY—DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.

"My anxiety to obtain possession of that beard was because it is stained with the blood of Benjamin Hunter," began Cartier. "It fell from my face into a pool of blood."

"No, no! I did not commit the crime!" he exclaimed, catching the significant glances between the detectives.

"No," he continued, "I did not commit the crime, though I made arrangements for it—or rather arrangements which led to it, for murder did not enter into our scheme at any time."

Then in a dreamy, straggling fashion, Cartier went on to tell how he had formed the acquaintance of Fred Hunter some years previous while in Vienna, in which city the latter had been anything but the model young man he now was, or rather pretended to be.

After the murder hinted at by Fox, Cartier had wandered through various cities, finally fetching up in New York where he met Hunter.

The Frenchman had some money, and Hunter had the handling of immense sums—but not much of his own.

Both were inveterate gamblers, and even before the arrival of Cartier, the hypocritical young banker was making free with the funds intrusted to him by his father.

After Cartier's arrival the stealings grew larger and larger, for through the Frenchman the young banker was enabled to gamble in Wall street during the day, as well as in Considine's at night.

About the time of the murder, young Hunter was enormously behindhand, and nothing but his father's implicit confidence in him prevented this from being discovered.

Two days previous to his death, the old banker informed his younger son that he intended to withdraw a large sum from the concern, and then resign all interest in its management.

"I do this," said the confiding father, "to show how pleased I am with your care and attention to the business. After this week, you will be the controlling power. Perhaps your brother will begin to realize that pleasure and profit seldom run together when he finds that you have stepped over his head."

This was very flattering to Frederick's skill in dissimulation, and would have been very agreeable a week previous—before the young speculator was caught in a "corner" for nearly fifty thousand dollars—but at the moment it was very alarming intelligence.

In business matters, the old banker was as the sun, and as Frederick well knew, the slightest indication of a desire to delay the delivery of the required amount would certainly excite suspicion, and probably lead to an investigation.

In this dilemma, Frederick sent for Cartier, and after learning that Hunter, Sr., wanted the amount to be in certain Government bonds, devised a scheme which promised to cover the son's defalcation.

"Stay a little later than usual that night, and when you get home he will probably be in his room, as you say he generally is while your mother is away. Have the supposed bonds in an envelope—a genuine one on top, and the rest blank paper. Say you want to consult him about something—you can easily get up a story—and at the same time ask for the key of the safe to put the bonds away," advised Cartier.

"But suppose he asks to examine them?" objected the other.

"Then a theft must have been committed in the office instead of the burglary which

"I will arrange for the house," was the significant reply.

"All the explanation you need give will be that you left the envelope with the bonds on your desk, or in the open safe. Further than that you know nothing," added Cartier.

So it was arranged—young Hunter agreeing to notify his friend in case the burglary should be necessary.

Receiving no notice to the contrary at the appointed time, the Frenchman notified the men he had engaged that everything would be in readiness for them, and then to be doubly sure, called on the young banker.

As they were not supposed to be acquainted, Cartier wore the beard in order to avoid being recognized by the servants, and meeting his friend, learned that everything was progressing satisfactorily.

Hunter, senior, had a meeting to attend to that evening, and left home immediately after his arrival, first giving the latter the key and directing him to place the bonds in the safe.

"So there is nothing now to be done except to have the burglary committed," Frederick had said, and as the old gentleman was not expected back until nearly midnight, the confederates sat talking and planning until the closing of the front door warned them that it was later than they thought.

The remainder of Cartier's story may be given in his own language:

"I didn't care about being forced to remain until the old gentleman fell asleep, for it was agreed that I should admit the burglars, as there was danger in letting them know that Fred was privy to the affair, and, moreover, he was crazy to play that night.

"Well, I admitted my people, and then went home—next door, but instead of going to bed as intended, I grew uneasy—so much so, that about half-past four I stopped measuring my parlor floor and went next door.

"Going softly up-stairs I glanced into Mr. Hunter's room—on my way to Fred's—and was fairly paralyzed to see him lying on the floor apparently dead.

"After I had pulled myself together a little, I went on and aroused Fred. He seemed as much horrified as I really felt, and together we visited the scene of the murder.

"Everything was just as described in the newspapers, and the bogus package was gone—(although Mr. Hunter's death had done away with the necessity of taking it)—and we agreed that it would be wise to let somebody else discover what had happened.

"As I was about to leave, the false beard became disarranged, and in trying to adjust it, I let it drop. Fred picked it up—and kept it, saying he would burn it. He didn't however, and two or three times since has intimated that he could hang me—making the threat in a half-jest—whole earnest fashion that has made me feel very uncomfortable."

"Where was Will Hunter all this time?" asked Duncan, as Cartier paused as if his story was finished.

"I don't know where he was, but I do know that he had not been home, up to half-past four. He must have found the body immediately after returning."

"And you do not know who committed the murder?" asked Fox.

"No; I do not know," significantly answered Cartier. "I have not made any inquiries of the men I engaged, because—"

"Who are they?" interrupted Duncan.

Instead of answering, Cartier uttered a cry of terror, and before the others could interfere Will Hunter had him by the throat! Together they rolled over and over the floor, struggling like demons. Suddenly the Frenchman tore himself from Hunter's grasp, and with one mad plunge went through the window.

This very short but intensely exciting

scene so engrossed the attention of the detectives that they failed to perceive two men standing in the doorway—Carpenter and Norton.

Not so Diamond, who, as Cartier plunged through the window, made a rush for the door. At the same moment, Norton hurled what proved to be a small dynamite bomb into the room!

There was a tremendous crash, the three within fell to the floor, and the three without tumbled down stairs.

To avoid injuring his confederate Dick had been compelled to throw the bomb against the opposite wall, and while everything in that room was wrecked, the wall itself knocked to pieces, and the three men rendered senseless by the terrific concussion—that was the extent of the damage. Nobody was killed, or even seriously injured.

"They've got clean away from us," ruefully remarked Duncan, as he arose from the floor.

"Looks like it, but we'll make a try at the other house," returned Fox, and having removed Will Hunter to the nearest house, the detectives, accompanied by a squad of police, made a descent on the counterfeiters' den—but there was nothing to be found.

Cartier's plunge through the window had resulted in his death—his body being impaled on the iron railings surrounding the house.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAST ACT—IN FOUR SCENES.

SCENE I.

A WEEK subsequent to the events narrated in the preceding chapter people generally, and the "upper ten" of New York in particular, are startled by a rumor that Will Hunter has returned to the city, after having a narrow escape from death at the hands of unknown kidnappers—and, for once, Rumor is right.

Weak from ill-treatment and lack of proper nourishment, Will Hunter had suffered most from the shock caused by the explosion of the bomb, but when he did finally fully recover consciousness, he also recovered his senses.

Fox had had him removed to New York—to his (Fox's) own house, and the physician who was called in having declared that perfect quiet and careful nursing were all that was needed to restore the patient to his former self, the two detectives held a consultation, the upshot of which is best told by the following conversation between Miss Jessie Spencer, nurse, and Mr. Will Hunter, patient, on the morning the rumor referred to began to gain ground.

The patient is about to call on his brother upon the advice of the detectives—one of whom has preceded him to the office in Wall street while the other is in conversation with Mr. Williams in the Hunter mansion.

"I don't know what to say, or do, Miss Spencer," declares the patient. "The doctor says it is altogether owing to your care that I have recovered, and Mr. Fox tells me you urged him to search for me—or for Duncan, and through him for me, so that I owe you my life twice over."

Miss Spencer colors slightly, and looks a little confused, under the earnest gaze of the speaker, and murmurs something inaudible.

"I wish I could see my way clear," continues the young man, "but until this mystery, and the monstrous suspicion attached to me regarding it, is cleared up, I know not what to say or do."

There is a third party present—Mrs. Fox, the mother of the old (?) detective—who thinks it a pity that these two should be kept apart for the want of a little common sense, so she says:

"Don't you think, Mr. Hunter, that it would be a good idea to say what you've got

in mind, now, and marry Miss Spencer as soon as she will let you, instead of putting it off until another man steps into your shoes? (!)

"People so much in love with each other, should not be so shy about speaking of it," added Mrs. Fox, and then disappeared like the wise woman she was, leaving confusion on both sides behind her.

The man is first to recover, and noting the downcast eyes, and burning face, of his fair companion asks:

"I know I am not justified in expecting it, nor did I mean to declare my love until my reputation was cleared, but may I hope that Mrs. Fox was not altogether wrong regarding you, Miss Spencer—Jessie?"

He was advancing while speaking, and with the last word took her hand. She did not attempt to withdraw it, and when the young man started down-town an hour after, he was the picture of happiness—and half an hour late.

That half-hour cost a man's life.

SCENE II.

Farrel the Fox has just laid before Fred Hunter, the banker, the story told him by Cartier.

"A pretty tale, truly," remarks the young man with a ghastly smile, and with a tremendous effort pulls himself together to ask:

"But who do you think will believe this story? The man who you say told you this, is dead—so it looks like blackmail."

"Mr. Hunter, you are deceiving yourself," quietly replied Fox. "The gambling-house attendants will identify when placed in disguise—"

A knock at the office door interrupted the speaker, and a moment later a clerk announced:

"Gentleman of the name of Duncan wants to see you, Mr. Hunter."

"Duncan, Duncan? What does he want?"

"Wants to see you in private, sir. That's all he'll say, but—"

The entrance of Daring Dave interrupted the clerk, who, at a sign from his employer, retired as Fox said:

"This is a gentleman who, like myself, is endeavoring to clear up the mystery surrounding your father's death. To do that, it is necessary that you should inform us who were the men engaged to commit the burglary. I believe Mr. Duncan has learned something which will convince you that attempting to shield those men will only injure yourself.

"Am I right, Dave?"

"You are, sir. I have just left a man who will swear that Mr. Frederick Hunter returned home about the time the murder was committed; that about half past four somebody rapped upon his door, and that after a few minutes' conversation Mr. Hunter and the unknown descended to the second floor—where the murdered man was discovered an hour or so later."

Fred Hunter was now the color of death, and not deeming further proof necessary, Fox said:

"I hope you are satisfied, now, Mr. Hunter, that safety lies only in helping us. Will you tell me the names of those men?"

"I don't know anything about it," was the dogged response.

"Anything else, Dave?" asked Fox.

"Yes, this same man has watched Mr. Hunter disguising himself night after night, and has followed him to Considine's gambling-rooms—proving that Mr. Hunter has been, and is, leading a double life."

"Now, will you tell me?" asked Fox.

"I don't know anything about it," reiterated the young man.

Then the Fox became a little tigerish.

"Dave, you go get a warrant," he directed, and turning to the banker continued:

"You have just one half hour to decide

which you will be—friend or foe. If the latter I can assure you that you will spend this night behind the bars—charged with murder!

"I shall wait outside until the warrant arrives—ready to hear you if you decide to talk, and to prevent you from escaping if you attempt it."

The young banker made no response, but, as the detectives left him, Fox heard a weary sigh, and caught the muttered words:

"Only twenty-four! It's hard—very hard!"

"Perhaps he will talk when his brother arrives?" remarked Duncan as he was about to go for the warrant.

"Possibly. I wish he'd come," returned Fox, who was puzzling over the words he caught when leaving the private office.

"He's liable to be here at any minute; he's late now," said Duncan, as he started off.

But, as the reader knows, Will Hunter was very much engaged that morning, and did not put in an appearance until it was nearly time for Duncan to return.

"Go in to your brother and try to persuade him to tell you, or me, the names of the men who were in the house the night your father was murdered," hastily directed the detective.

"Hurry up! I'll explain afterward," urged Fox, as Will, who had been kept in ignorance as far as possible, stared at him in astonishment.

The young man obeyed—slowly instead of hurriedly—but, a half-minute later came running to the door, and Duncan arriving at the same moment was just in time to hear:

"Come—quick! Fred's committed suicide!"

"Run for a doctor, Dave!" exclaimed Fox, as he rushed into the office.

It was useless, however. Fred Hunter was dead before his brother entered, and a bottle of strychnine showed how he had died.

"It's too bad; he's carried the secret with him," remarked Duncan, as he and Fox started up-town.

"Yes," assented the latter, "but I'm very much inclined to believe that the burglars had little, if anything to do with the murder, and for our man's sake we had better drop the case right where we are."

Duncan did not appear to be very much astonished to hear this, for he bowed a silent assent, and his companion continued:

"I'll go on, and put the screws to this rascal Butler, and will see you to-night."

SCENE III.

Mr. Butler was just about leaving his palatial residence when Mr. Fox was announced:

The millionaire looked troubled on hearing the name of the caller, for Jessie had been followed on the day she visited Fox's office, and for the past two weeks she had been missing, which, in view of what Julie had overheard, worried Mr. Butler very much.

"Mr. Butler, I've come to talk to you regarding your niece—Miss Spencer," began Fox calmly, and, without being invited, seated himself.

"Then you had better be quick about it, for I have no time to waste on you—or her," sharply returned the millionaire.

"Oh, yes you have!" coolly contradicted the visitor. "You are Miss Spencer's guardian, and as she will be of age in a few days, I've called to give you a friendly hint that when you turn over her property it will be wise—very wise—to turn over the whole of it."

"What? Do you dare insinuate—"

"No, sir; I don't insinuate anything," interrupted Fox, and drawing a note-book from his pocket, continued:

"Sit down, Mr. Butler, and I'll read you some hard facts."

The millionaire uttered an angry oath, and calmly closing the note-book, the detective asked:

"Would you prefer to have the story of how you defrauded your orphan niece read in court—with you a prisoner—to hearing it here?"

"Here!" gasped Butler, who had turned deadly pale, and as he spoke sunk into a chair, apparently unable to support himself.

For ten minutes Fox read from his note-book, and, then, was stopped by:

"Enough! Enough! What will you accept as the price of your silence? Name your own figure, and with it I'll give you a guarantee that my niece will lose nothing by it."

"Give me the guarantee—that's my price!" replied the detective.

SCENE IV.

It is just one year since the murder of Benjamin Hunter sent a thrill of horror through the good people of the City of New York.

Assembled in a quiet country church near the city are a dozen people—there for the purpose of witnessing the wedding of Jessie Spencer to William Hunter.

After the wedding the party adjourn to a pretty cottage in the vicinity, and there, responding to a toast, the bridegroom arises to declare:

"I have but little to say, and that little must be neither of my wife nor myself, for to those two gentlemen I am indebted for life, liberty, reason—and my wife!"

The gentlemen referred to were Fox and Duncan, and though wedding presents were forbidden, they certainly were not forgotten, by the bridegroom, for each of the detectives found under his plate an envelope containing a check which fairly astonished him.

THE END.

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